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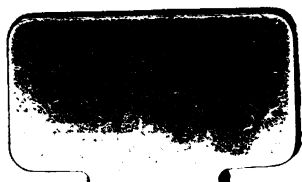
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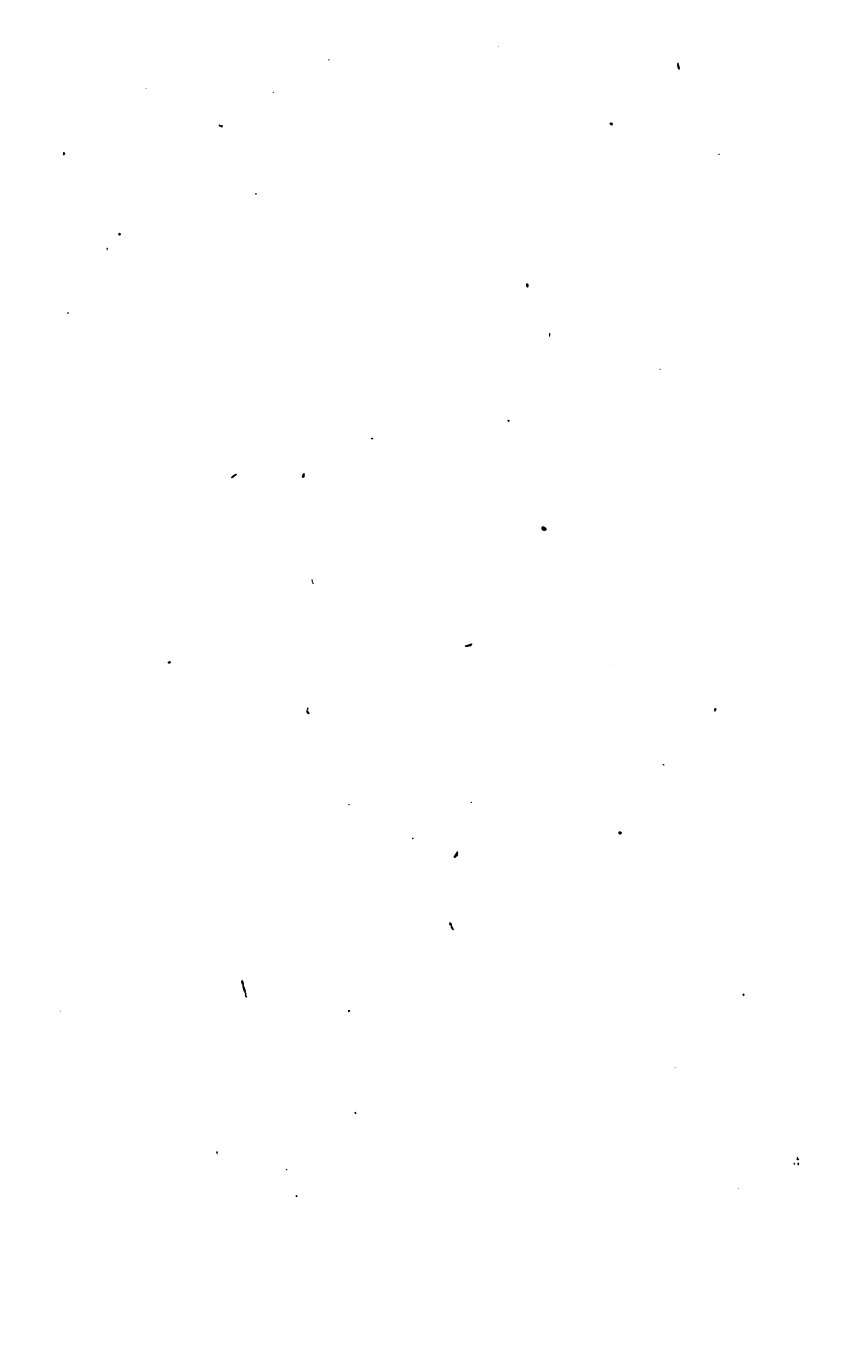
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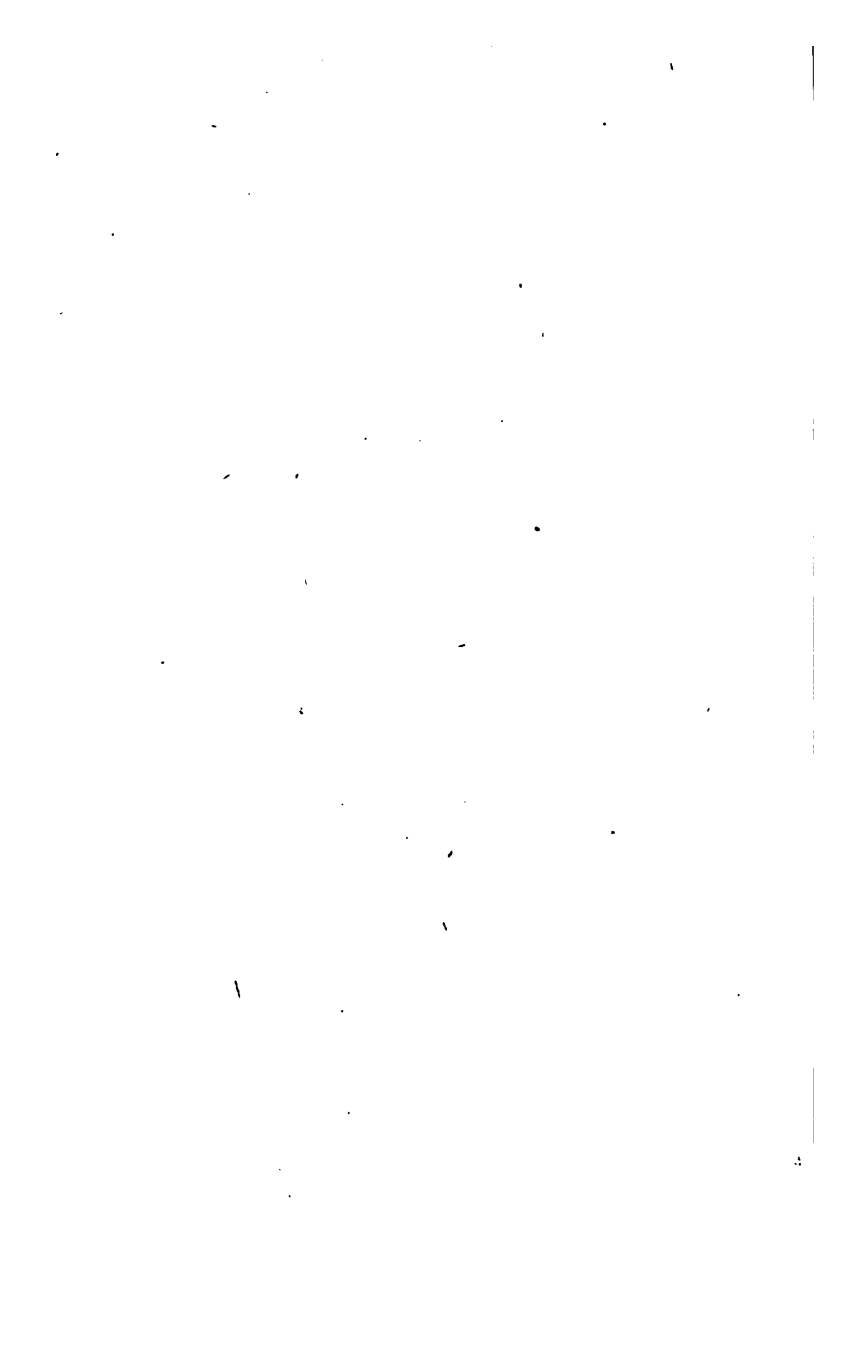
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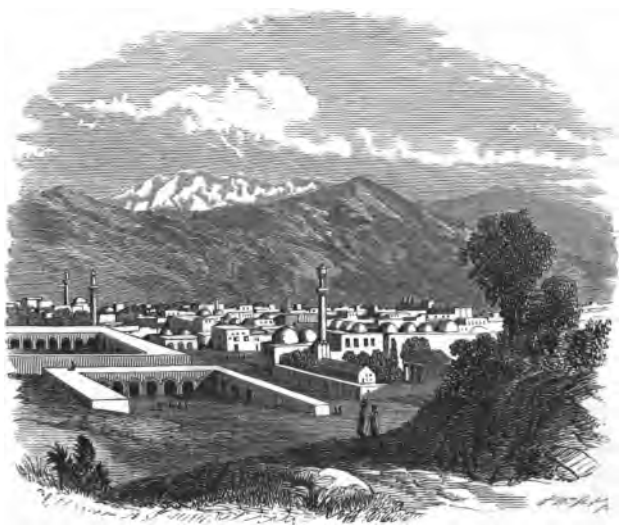


SAUL OF TARSUS.



SAUL OF TARSAUS.





TARSUS.

Front.

SAUL.

BY THE

REV. THORNLEY SMITH.



ANTIOCH.

LONDON :

JAMES BLACKWOOD, PATERNOSTER ROW.



SAUL OF TARSUS:

The Pharisee, the Convert, the Apostle,
and the Martyr.

BY THE

REV. THORNLEY SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH." "THE HISTORY OF MOSES,"
ETC.

Illustrated.

100. c. 60.

LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD, PATERNOSTER ROW.
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P R E F A C E.

AN acquaintance with the history and labours of the great Apostle of the Gentiles is highly necessary, not only to the Christian minister, but to all who are engaged in giving religious instruction to the young. There are, however, many teachers and parents who have neither the means to obtain nor the time to read the large and expensive works which have been published on this subject during the last few years, and hence, to such as these, a work like the present may not be unacceptable. In a somewhat new form, it presents a brief outline of St. Paul's eventful life, and seeks to enforce some of the lessons which that life suggests. Many works have been consulted in its preparation, and to these, several of which are mentioned in the margin, the author would refer

those of his readers who are anxious to pursue their inquiries further. The subject is one of intense and never-failing interest; nor can the minds of our rising youth be directed to it without advantage to themselves and others. If to any the Scriptures are uninviting, it is chiefly because they are not read intelligently. Let the young be taught to study God's Word in the light of history, geography, and antiquities, and many of what are deemed its driest portions, will become more attractive to them than any other books, whilst the facts of the Bible will be engraven on their memories, and its doctrines enshrined within their hearts.

A Chronological Table is given at the end of this volume, by the help of which, St. Paul's travels may be traced on any map of Asia and Europe, each place he visited being set down in order.

I.

The Pharisee.

"I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts xxiii. 6).

"After the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee"
(Acts xxvi. 5).

"A Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee"
(Phil. iii. 5).

“O Eye, whose glance no falsehood can endure,
Grant me to wisely judge, and well discern
Nature from grace—Thy light serene and pure
From grosser fires that in and round me burn.
Let no strange fire be kindled on the shrine
Within my heart, lest I should madly bring
The hated offering unto thee, O King.
Ah ! blest the soul whose light is born of Thine.

“When reason contradicts thy law, or climbs
So high, she weeneth to know more than Thou ;
Break down her confidence, great God, betimes,
And teach her lowly at thy feet to bow.
Nor let my proud heart dictate, Lord, to Thee,
But turn the wayward will that seeks its own,
And wake the love that clings to Thee alone,
And take Thy judgment in humility.”

G. ARNOLD, 1666—1714.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

No one man, he only excepted who was more than man, has exercised so powerful, and withal so beneficial an influence on the human race as Saul of Tarsus. This statement is made with the long line of illustrious worthies both of ancient and of modern times—patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, kings, warriors, poets, and philosophers—fully before us, including such names as Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Homer, Cyrus, Alexander, and a thousand others; and we have no hesitation in affirming, that as benefactors to the world, the best of them must give the palm to the man whose history and character we are about to sketch, and that he has exerted, and is exerting at the present time, a mightier influence on the minds of

men than even the illustrious lawgivers of Israel, the royal psalmist, or the enraptured seer.

But if this be true, and proofs of it will appear in the sequel of this narrative, how full of interest and instruction must be Saul's eventful life, and how desirable it is that men of all classes should make themselves acquainted with it as far as possible. Next to the biography of Jesus of Nazareth, that of Saul is the most interesting to which the mind can turn; and hence it is not surprising that so many works have been written upon it as are now extant, and that it still continues, age after age, to form a subject of inquiry and elucidation by men of considerable skill and learning. Within the last few years, several works on the life and writings of St. Paul have appeared, which will take their place among the standard writings of the age; and it is a life of such varied incident, is so closely connected with many of the illustrious cities of the ancient world, and forms so prominent a chapter in the rise and progress of Christianity among the Gentile nations of the world, that to exhaust it is literally impossible, so that there is, and perhaps ever will be, room for further investigation respecting it, and, therefore, for additional efforts to illustrate its facts and lessons. Some men's histories being once told need to be told no more, but that of

Saul's may be told a hundred times, yet told again. Ours, however, is an humble task. It is to look at the history of Saul of Tarsus in relation to the four characters in which he appears in the Acts of the Apostles, and in his own writings—the PHARISEE, the CONVERT, the APOSTLE, and the MARTYR; and, specially with a view to the instruction of the young, to sketch the leading occurrences of his life, and enforce the lessons which it naturally suggests. In making this attempt, we shall avail ourselves of all the aids which biblical literature will afford, and shall thus place in the hands of our readers the results of the inquiries of the most eminent scholars—inquiries which the young cannot make for themselves, even if all the works referred to were at their command.

Saul the Pharisee is then the first character we shall have to consider; and, to prepare the way for this part of his history, it will be necessary to glance in this introductory section at the Pharisees generally, and to inquire who and what they were. In the days of our Lord, the Jewish nation comprised three principal religious sects—the Essenes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees. Of the **ESSENES** we have no information in the New Testament; but, from the writings of Josephus, we learn that they were ascetics, living in separate communities chiefly in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, and

practising the strictest moral discipline. This name is said by some to be derived from a word which signifies "holy," by others from a Hebrew verb which means "to heal." They first appeared after the Babylonish captivity, and, giving themselves up to a life of contemplation, they professed to hold riches in contempt, to despise all the superfluities of life, and to keep in check all the affections and passions of the soul. We have their modern representatives in the Monasteries of the Greek and Roman Churches—monasticism, as it would seem, being closely related to, if not the offspring of Essenism. *

The SADDUCEES, who are frequently mentioned in the history of our Lord, and whose doctrines he often condemned, are said by the Rabbins to have taken their name from one Zadok their founder, a pupil of Antigonus Jocho, under whose teaching he was led to deny the doctrine of a future state. But their name has also been derived from a Hebrew word signifying "the just ones;" and it is probable that they boasted of being just both to God and men, though there is little doubt that they were no better in this respect than the Pharisees, to whom they stood opposed. They were the sceptics of the age, and whilst professing

* Josephus' *Antiq.*, xiii. 5—9. Jahn's *Sacred Antiq.*, §17.

to believe in the divine mission of Moses, and to receive the pentateuch as an inspired production, they denied the existence of both angels and spirits, and contended that there was no existence for man beyond the grave. The free-thinkers of our times, as they please to call themselves, are their modern representatives, and Sadduceeism is doubtless the creed of numbers who are unwilling to confess it.*

But in the time of our Lord, the dominant sect was that of the PHARISEES, whose name denotes those who are separated—*i.e.*, from all other persons, by the correctness of their opinions and the holiness of their lives. Unlike the Sadducees, they believed in the authority of the Old Testament as a whole, and therefore appealed to it as the arbiter of religious controversy. Yet they greatly admired the lawgiver of Israel, and boasted that they were the disciples of Moses, in opposition to Jesus of Nazareth, whom they accused of many violations of the law. It was, however, the ceremonial law, respecting which they were so scrupulous, not the moral; and hence our Lord addressed them in language such as this: "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, for ye make clean the

* Josephus' Antiq., xviii. 1—3. Jahn, 317.

outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Matt. xxiii. 24—26). Did the Pharisee observe the Sabbath? it was only in the outward form. Did he attend the Jewish festivals? it was with a proud and ostentatious spirit. Did he pay the accustomed tithes? it was of mint, and anise, and cummin. Little things he regarded; weightier matters he let alone.

He was characterized, too, for his zeal in making proselytes. He would compass sea and land to win men over to his side, and often, doubtless, was he seen in the public thoroughfares of the towns and cities, not only of Palestine, but of Greece and Rome, in earnest conversation with men on the subject of his religion, with the hope of inducing them to embrace his opinions. There would have been nothing wrong in this, had the motive been perfectly pure and right; but the zeal of the Pharisee was a misdirected zeal, having for its object not the conversion of men to Judaism, but their conversion to Pharisaism. He took away the key of knowledge, and instead of opening with it the door of heaven, he would neither enter that door himself nor suffer others to enter it who desired to do so. Hence his proselytism was little worth. It did not lead men to God. It made them not servants of the Lord Jehovah, but hypocrites; and,

therefore, two-fold more the children of hell than were even the Pharisees themselves. For it is better a thousand times that a man be an honest heathen than a hypocritical Jew or Christian. There is nothing more despicable in the sight of God than hypocrisy and pretence, so that those who lead men to embrace a certain set of opinions without convincing them that those opinions are right, do them an injury of the most serious nature. This, however, was the object of the Pharisee — to make proselytes, it mattered not whether they were sincere converts or not; and this with a view to the subversion of the power of the Sadducees, who, through the influence of the family of the Herods, had gained the ascendancy over every other sect in the land.

But the worst features in the Pharisee were his pride and ostentation. There was nothing retiring in the character of his religion; it was all parade and pomp. Had you lived in Palestine in the days of Christ, you would have seen him standing in the corners of the streets with a phylactery upon his head much broader than other men's (Matt. xxiii. 5), and habited in a garment distinguished for its large blue border (Matt. xxiii. 5), muttering to himself long prayers (Matt. xxiii. 14), and looking now and then at the passer by, to see whether he was taking notice of him, and was disposed to praise him as a very holy man. If he

was invited to a feast, he would press his way to the highest seat in the room. If he attended the annual festivals at Jerusalem, he would make a circuit to the east of the Jordan, that he might avoid coming in contact with the unclean Samaritan. If he went to the temple to pray, he would stand by himself, at a distance from the publican who might happen to be there, and would boast of his good deeds, and give thanks to God that he was so much better than other men. How pleased he was to be called Rabbi! Rabbi!—to have assigned to him a conspicuous seat in the synagogue!—to be thought a rigid observer of the law! Meanwhile he often looked upon others with contempt; and if his neighbour would not sound his trumpet, he would take care to sound it well himself. (Matt. xxiii. 1—24; Luke xi. 38—50; xviii. 10—14.)

There were some among the sect, no doubt, who were much superior to the generality of the Pharisees—conscientious men, who really thought that they were doing God service, who were anxious to promote the spread of true religion, and to uphold the authority of Moses and the prophets. Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee of this kind; yet a Pharisee, he was of the straitest class, and, as we shall see, his Pharisaism carried him into the most dangerous excesses, and led him to become a persecutor of the disciples of our Lord.

SECTION II.

SAUL'S BOYHOOD.

SAUL of Tarsus was a Pharisee by birth. "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," said he at Jerusalem, and by this declaration he won many of the Pharisees to his side (Acts xxiii. 6).

The honour of giving birth to Saul belongs to no city or town of Palestine. Tarsus, where he first saw the light, was the principal town of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, bounded on the east by the mountains of Amanus which separated it from Syria, on the north by the lofty Taurus, and on the south by Cappadocia and an arm of the Mediterranean Sea. This province was celebrated for its breed of horses, and was peculiarly fertile in grain, fruit, and wine. In early times it had its own kings; but it was subdued by Alexander the Great, and, at a later period, was annexed to the Roman Empire.

Tarsus, its capital, was situated on a fertile

plain, and was watered by the river Cydnus, which divided it into two nearly equal parts. The mouth of the river was two leagues from the city, but it was navigable for the ships of Rome, and busy were the scenes which were often witnessed in the harbour and in the streets of Tarsus at the period of which we write. In many respects it was "no mean city." Within its gates was one of the three great schools of learning, those of Athens and Alexandria being scarcely superior to it. Syrians, Cilicians, Isaurians, Cappadocians, together with Jewish, Greek, and Roman merchants, met and transacted business in its markets. It was a free town, so that it possessed the right of choosing its own magistracy, and was governed by its own laws. It contained a rude and somewhat barbarous population ; but many of its inhabitants spoke the Greek language, and were highly civilized and refined.

We look with considerable interest on the birth-places of illustrious men, and many of these are visited by travellers with peculiar pleasure. That of Shakespeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon ; that of Sir Isaac Newton, at Woolsthorpe ; that of Wellington, at Dangan in Ireland, for example, will always be viewed by the tourist with no little satisfaction, and even those who have never seen these spots, and who do not hope to see them, will

read and hear of them with similar emotions. Who, then, can hear or read of Tarsus—the birth-place of the great Apostle of the Gentiles—without peculiar interest? It is now a poor decayed town, inhabited by Turks, Armenians, and Greeks, the entire population not exceeding six thousand; but we cannot forget what it once was, and especially that it was the spot where Paul was born, and where he spent his earliest years.

Of his parents we know little. But when speaking of his origin on one occasion, he said, “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Phil. iii. 4, 5). The expression “an Hebrew of the Hebrews,” implies that both his parents were Hebrews; and it is highly probable that the family had belonged to the eastern dispersion or to the Jews of Palestine. The tribe of Benjamin was one of the most celebrated of all the tribes of Israel, and in that tribe the name Saul was somewhat popular, being that of the son of Kish, the first king of Israel. It is said to signify “desired” or “prayed for,” whence the child of whom we now write may have received that name because of his having been given to his parents, like Samuel, the son of

Elkanah and Hannah, in answer to their prayers. They were probably, though Pharisees, truly pious; and having asked of the Lord a son, gave to him a name commemorative of the fact, and, at the same time, indicative of their joy and gratitude. The name Paul or Paulus, which he subsequently took, was of Hellenistic origin; and it has been supposed that by this name the child was called by the Gentiles, whilst by the Hebrews he was known as Saul.

The year of his birth cannot be fixed with certainty; but as he was a young man at the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, and as that event took place in A.D. 33, he may have been born about the year 2 of our era, or, as some have thought, about the year 5 or 6. He was "circumcised the eighth day," according to the law, and thus "separated," as it were, from his "mother's womb" (Gal. i. 15), and dedicated to the service of the Lord Jehovah, as is many a child now, in the solemn rite of baptism. Careful, no doubt, would his parents be of his early training; and we can imagine that his mother would read to him, and teach him to read, the stories in the Old Testament of Joseph and Benjamin, of Moses and Samuel, of Saul, Jonathan, and David, and that he would thus become, at an early age, acquainted with the history of his people and his tribe. He



DAMASCUS.

had a sister, who was afterwards married,* and with her he would often walk in the fields beyond the city, and pluck the flowers, and listen to the singing of the birds ; and many, doubtless, were the happy hours his childhood knew in the pious home in which he was trained. He speaks of Andronicus and Junia, his "kinsmen" (Rom. xvi. 7), but whether by that expression he means that they were near relations, or only persons of the same tribe, is a disputed point. If the former, *they* too may have shared in the follies of his boyhood, and with them he may have visited the ships in the harbour, bathed in the river, or rambled on the plain. Childhood is a blessed thing, and blessed are its years if only they are spent amidst the influences of good society and a peaceful home. Few, then, and brief are the sorrows it experiences—

"The tear down childhood's cheeks that flow
Is like the dew-drop on the rose ;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry."

Happy childhood ! One could almost wish for its return. Perhaps Saul looked back upon it in his later years with pleasure ; and it may be that he had cause to give God thanks, as doubtless many

* See Acts xxiii. 16.

of our readers have, for the privileges he then enjoyed.

Though the parents of Saul were not unacquainted with the Hebrew language, yet it is probable that they were Hellenists, or Jews who spoke the Greek tongue ; and it is certain that this was the tongue with which Saul himself was familiar from his infancy. He was taught to read the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, and in later life he not only spoke Greek fluently, but all his epistles were written in Hellenistic Greek. Was he then sent to school at Tarsus ? It is highly probable that he was. He would not, however, be sent to one of the schools of Gentile learning, for his parents would naturally fear lest, in such a seminary, his youthful mind would be turned aside from the religion of his ancestors, and become poisoned with the foolish notion of the heathen. Religious parents should ever be careful to inquire into the character of the school in which they propose to place their children, for even in our own day there are seminaries in which their morals would be corrupted, and their minds perverted from the truth. Be thankful, youthful reader, if you have parents whose assiduous care it is to give you a sound religious education, and who, in the selection of a school for you, have been guided by a wish that you should

be preserved from the contamination of vice and error.

In his epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul speaks of the law as "our pedagogue,* to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. iii. 24), and some have supposed that he there alludes to the fact that, in his own childhood, a servant, or slave, used to lead him to school from his father's house, as we have often seen many a kind servant do for little boys in our own day. Imagine that you see the little fellow getting ready in the morning, for the duties of the day. The schoolmaster's residence is at some distance from his father's house, and perhaps the road to it lies through some of the busy streets of the city. Saul, then, must not go alone, lest some harm should happen him, and, therefore, one of the servants of the family conducts him to the place, and, after school hours, returns to fetch him home.

To the synagogue, too, the youthful Saul would be frequently conducted. Synagogues were places of Jewish worship, in which prayers were offered morning and evening, the law and the prophets read in order, and discourses delivered by the rabbis or teachers. The public prayers, or liturgy of the synagogue, consisted of the *Schemah*, and

* Not "schoolmaster," as in our version, but "pedagogue," or "slave"—*παιδαγωγός*.

of the *Schemon Esre*, the former embracing three portions selected from the book of Deuteronomy (chap. ix. 4—9, and xi. 13—21), and from the book of Numbers (chap. xv. 37—41), and the latter nineteen psalms or eulogies, eighteen of which were said to have been composed by Ezra the scribe, and one—the twelfth—by Rabban Gamaliel, against heretics. The law was always read in the Hebrew tongue; and the reader, who occupied a pulpit, offered, before he read, a short prayer or doxology, to which the people gave a response. The five books of Moses were read through once every year; and a selection from the prophets, which term included the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures, with the exception of the Psalms, was read on festival and fast days, and on the morning of every Sabbath. The discourses delivered in the synagogues consisted chiefly of running commentaries on the scriptures that were read, often so allegorical as to be not merely unprofitable, but injurious. Sometimes the discourses took the form of parables, a mode of instruction very usual in eastern countries, and adopted by our Lord himself; and not unfrequently sermons were delivered, having been introduced into the synagogues about one hundred years before the time of Christ.

Imagine, then, the youthful Saul, accompanied

by his father, attending the services of the synagogue at Tarsus. If he was a thoughtful youth, as he no doubt was, deep would be the impressions made upon his mind by what he saw and heard. He would listen attentively to the reading of the law and of the prophets; he would pay some regard to the expositions and discourses of the learned rabbis; and he would become familiar with such prayers, or eulogies, as the following, which forms the first of the Schemon Esre:—
“Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; the great God, powerful and tremendous; the high God, bountifully dispensing benefit; the Creator and possessor of the universe, who rememberest the piety of our fathers; and in love givest a Redeemer to their children for thy name’s sake; O, our King, our Protector our Saviour, and Shield. Blessed art thou, O God, who art the Shield of Abraham.”* Nor were these privileges lost upon the youth. There is reason to believe that he was attentive to his religious duties from very early life, for in his second epistle to Timothy, he says, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience;” an expression which seems to imply that his

* See Bernard’s “Synagogue and the Church,” chaps. xi., xii., xiii. Fellowes, London.

ancestors were conscientiously pious persons, and that he had trodden in their steps. A Pharisee he was, but he was a Pharisee of the better class; and at that time it was the best thing he could be. Nor can we doubt that his early training fitted him for the position he was to occupy in later life as the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world.

Though Saul's father was somewhat wealthy, yet he taught his son a trade, which was probably his own, that of tent-making.* "He who teacheth not his son a trade," says Rabbi Judah, "doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief;" and Rabban Gamaliel also said, "He that hath a trade in his hands, to what is he like? He is like a garden that is fenced." These are wise maxims, and it was well for Saul that his father acted on them. Yet the work of tent-making was not very arduous, so that even in his early youth Saul may have begun to learn it. The tents were made of goat's hair, for which the province of Cilicia was so famous, that the hair-cloth received the name of Cilisium. "The cloth obtained by spinning and weaving goats' hair was nearly black, and was used for the coarse habits which sailors and fishermen wore, as it was the least subject to be destroyed by being wet; also for horse-cloths, tents, sacks, and

* See Acts xviii. 3; xx. 34; 1 Cor. iv. 12, &c., &c.

bags to hold workmen's tools, and for the purpose of covering military engines, and the walls and towers of besieged cities, so as to deaden the force of the rain and to preserve the wood-work from being set on fire." * For tents, such a material would be invaluable, and many of those now used in the East are still made of it, or of a similar kind of cloth. Many tents, no doubt, were made of it in Tarsus; and ere he entered on his teens, young Saul began to work at the trade, perhaps, in the evening of the day, thus laying the foundation of those industrious habits for which he was distinguished in after life.

To form habits of industry in early youth is of essential importance to us all, whatever position in society we may occupy, and whatever gifts or talents we may possess. Let the youthful reader be thankful if his parents, like those of Saul, are anxious that he should be well employed, and let him second their endeavours, both at school and in every other sphere of duty; for then he will be prepared to act his part in the great drama of life to the divine glory and to his own advantage:

"Industry—

To meditate, to plan, resolve, perform,
Which in itself is good—as surely brings
Reward of good, no matter what be done."

* Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities."

But an indolent boy—one who can do nothing, or has no disposition to do anything—is a pest to everybody and a burden to himself. Better be a tent-maker, a blacksmith, a miner, or any other trade, however mean, than a lazy lounge, living on the labours and the earnings of others. It is the industrious boy of Tarsus who says—"If any will not work, neither should he eat."

Such was Saul's boyhood at Tarsus. His parents Pharisees, all his early notions were moulded after the fashion of that sect, and against Sadduceeism he would imbibe the strongest prejudices of which his youthful mind was capable. He would firmly believe in the doctrine of a future state; he would esteem, not only the books of Moses, but those of the Prophets also; he would be very rigid in his regard to religious ceremonies; and it is highly probable that he would expect the coming, and that speedily, of the Messiah, of whom the Prophet wrote. But such a Messiah as actually came he would not expect, for the Jews anticipated that when their Messiah came he would come as a mighty conqueror, to deliver them from the Roman yoke, and to place them as a nation on the very summit of authority and power.

SECTION III.

SAUL'S EDUCATION.

SAUL'S education commenced, as we have seen, at Tarsus; but to finish it he must go to the far-famed city of his fathers, and sit at the feet of one of the doctors of the law.

When, in later life, he stood before Agrippa as the apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul said, "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify," &c. (Acts xxvi. 4, 5), and on another occasion he spoke of himself as having been "*brought up* in the city" (Acts xxii. 3), expressions which imply that he left Tarsus, and went to Jerusalem at an early age. Of Jerusalem he had often heard, and, doubtless, he had seen the pilgrims, who passed through Tarsus and went up to the city to celebrate the annual feast; and just as many a youth of our own country anticipates

his first visit to our great metropolis, young Saul's imagination had fired at the thought of one day going himself to behold the place where David once lived, where Solomon had built the temple, and where now the second temple stood in its majesty and beauty, inferior to the first, yet still the pride and glory of the land. Jerusalem ! there was no spot on earth so sacred and so dear to the Jew as it. What a history it had had up to the days in which Saul lived ! And with that history he had already, we may presume, become acquainted, having read in the Old Testament of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, of the conquest of the city by the king of Babylon, of the seventy years' captivity of his people, and of their return to the city to rebuild its temples and its walls. With what interest, then, would he look forward to the day when he should himself visit it, and gaze with his own eyes upon its towers and palaces ! We can fancy him talking about it to his companions, and telling them what he should see and hear, until they would almost envy the boy for his expectations and long for the day when they should go too.

How did he go, then, you are ready to ask ? He might have gone by the overland route, which lay through the passes of Amanus, to Antioch, and thence by the western shores of Phœnicia, through

Tyre and Sidon. But that would have been a long and tedious journey, and the probability, therefore is, that he went by sea to Cæsarea, and thence to Jerusalem by the usual land journey. Many ships of commerce traded at that time between Tarsus and Cæsarea; and in one of them the youthful Saul embarked, most likely in company with his father, for the shores of Palestine.*

Do you remember the day, dear reader, on which you left your native place and your father's house for the first time in your life, to reside in some distant town or city? Remember it! O yes. It was one of the most eventful days of your life. Amidst mingled feelings of sorrow and of hope you received your mother's farewell kiss, and your sisters' last adieus, and then crossed the threshold of the house with tears, not knowing whether you would ever return to it again. Emotions such as these were doubtless felt by Saul as he left his peaceful home, set foot on board the ship in which he was to sail, and, as she left the port, stood upon the deck to catch one parting glance at those he was now leaving behind, some of whom, perhaps, he would see no more on earth. But if, as we have supposed, his father was with him, he would soon

* It is possible that the whole family went to Jerusalem at this time, but we have supposed Saul accompanied only by his father.

take heart; and as the ship proceeded down the Cydnus, reached its mouth and entered the Mediterranean Sea, he would be interested by the several objects on which his eye would rest, until, perhaps, sickness, which almost all new sailors experience, would compel him to lie down in his berth below.

But the voyage was a short one—about three hundred miles—and the landing place, Cæsarea, would soon appear in sight. This city was built by Herod the Great, and possessed many splendid buildings, among which was a temple dedicated to Cæsar. It would possess but few attractions, however, to the young traveller, and hence he would probably urge his father to hasten forward to Jerusalem, which was distant from it fifty-five miles. And now the celebrated city is in sight, and the youth, full of enthusiasm and expectation, enters within its gates and treads its sacred dust. “And are we really in Jerusalem?” we can fancy him saying to his father. “Is this really the city of David and the kings?” And we can readily conceive that he would exclaim, in the language of the royal psalmist, “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sake I will now say, peace be within thee; because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.”

Herod the Great was now dead, Archelaus

probably in exile, and the province of Judea under the government of a Procurator—one of the four who preceded Pontius Pilate. It may have been the time of a festival, and if so, crowds of people would be flocking to Jerusalem, and the temple courts would be occupied, perhaps, with buyers and sellers, and groups of professed but thoughtless devotees. If the young Tarsian visited the sacred fane immediately on his arrival, he would probably be somewhat disgusted at the scenes which he would witness. For alas ! the spirituality of religion was understood by few in those days, and though the world's Redeemer had already "come to his own," yet his own were not prepared to receive Him. Jesus was now living in obscurity at Nazareth ; but the time of his manifestation unto Israel, of his open rejection by the nation, and of his ignominious death was drawing near.

Two celebrated schools of learning existed in Jerusalem at this time—that of Hillel, and that of Schammai, which, though hostile one to another, were both Pharisaic schools. Over the former, Gamaliel, the son of Simeon, and the grandson of Hillel, now presided, and was so celebrated for his piety and learning that he was entitled "Rabban," a designation given by the Jews to six persons only besides himself. He was also styled "the

Beauty of the Law," and he is spoken of in the Talmud in most eulogistic terms. He was a Pharisee, and he is said to have added, after the rise of Christianity, the following prayer against heretics to the Schemon Esre:—"Let the apostates from the true religion have no hope; and let all the heretics, how many soever they be, suddenly perish; and let the kingdom of pride be rooted out and broken in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who destroyest the wicked, and dost bring down the proud."

The youthful Saul was placed, as a pupil, at his feet,* where his Pharisaic views and prejudices would, of course, become confirmed. Our younger readers will be interested in learning something of the nature of a Jewish school, especially as it differed considerably from such schools as they themselves attend, and we shall therefore advert to them here as briefly as we can.

The schools of the prophets, of which we read in the Old Testament,† probably had their origin in the time of Samuel, and were the precursors of the later schools of the synagogues. The public schools were conducted in an apartment connected with the synagogue, and the presiding doctor of the synagogue was also head of the school. He

* Acts xxii. 3.

† 1 Sam. xix. 18—24.

sat on an elevated chair, and his disciples at his feet. The instruction given was by means of question and answer, and the matters discussed related to the Jewish laws, rites, and ceremonies, but embraced, in the time of our Lord, many topics the most foolish and ridiculous. Thus, it is said in the Talmud, that a student asked Gamaliel whether the evening prayer was obligatory by the law or not. He answered in the affirmative, on which the student informed him that Rabbi Joshua had told him it was not obligatory. "Well," said Gamaliel, "when he appears to-morrow in the assembly, step forward and ask him the question again. He did so, and the expected answer raised a discussion."* It was probably against such things as he had frequently heard discussed in the school of Gamaliel that Paul, at a later period of his life, warned his disciple Timothy when he said, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith" (1 Tim. i. 4); for he had himself learned the folly and uselessness of such matters, and had long seen that they were utterly unworthy the attention of pious men, since other questions of momentous interest, and of

* Kitto's Bib. Cyclopædia, Art. Schools.

lasting value were ever presenting themselves to thoughtful minds. That Saul was a diligent student, is perhaps implied in the expressions he employs when writing to the Galatians: "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i. 14). Some youths, however, great the pains bestowed upon them, do their teachers no credit, but leave the school in which they are instructed with little more knowledge than when they entered it. Not so Saul of Tarsus. He was, we conceive, an attentive pupil, and though much that he learnt he had afterwards to unlearn, yet the discipline to which his mind was subject, and even the dialectic arguments in which he probably took part, prepared him, to some extent, for the momentous task he had subsequently to perform—that of defending Christianity against both Jewish and Gentile philosophers. He probably thought of the words of an apocryphal writer: "He that giveth his mind to the law of the Most High, and is occupied in the meditation thereof, will seek out the wisdom of all the ancient, and be occupied in prophecies. He will keep the sayings of the renowned men, and where subtle parables are he will be there also. He will out the secrets of grave sentences, and be conver-

sant in dark parables," &c. (Eccles. xxxix. 1—5). Great is the folly of a youth who having opportunities of obtaining a liberal education lets them slip past him, and spends the hours which ought to be devoted to study in idleness and dissipation. Had Saul done this it is doubtful whether he would have ever occupied so prominent a position on the page of history as he does, for though learning did not make him a minister of the gospel, it was one of the qualifications, as we shall hereafter see, essential for an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and it greatly contributed to his success in defending truth against the attacks both of Jewish rabbis and Gentile philosophers.

Whether Saul prosecuted the study of Greek literature under Gamaliel is not certain, but is highly probable. For there is little doubt that Gamaliel himself was conversant with the language and with the writings of the Greeks; and as Saul was perhaps intended by his parents for one of the learned professions, his teacher would take pains to qualify him for it to the utmost of his power. How long the scholar remained at Jerusalem we are not informed; but it has been supposed that, after having sat at the feet of Gamaliel for several years, he returned again for a while to Tarsus, where perhaps he attended the celebrated university, and became still better versed in the language and

literature of Greece. One thing is all but certain, that Saul was not at Jerusalem during the period of our Lord's public ministry in that city, and that he never saw our Lord whilst He sojourned here on earth, for, had he ever seen Him, there would doubtless be some allusion to the circumstance in his writings; but we find none.

Of Gamaliel, honourable mention is subsequently made in the Acts of Apostles, where he is called "a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people" (Acts v. 34). When Pêter and the rest of the apostles were brought before the council of the Sanhedrim, after their miraculous deliverance from the prison, Rabban Gamaliel proved himself one of the wisest men present, for he stood up in defence of the apostles, and said, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." And his advice was taken, and the apostles were set at liberty. Tradition says that, through the instrumentality of Peter and John, he was afterwards converted to Christianity; but the story is without foundation, as he was held in the greatest respect by the Jews to the day of his death, and Onkelos, one of his pupils, is said to have spent seventy pounds of incense at his grave in honour of his memory.

SECTION IV.

SAUL A PERSECUTOR.

AND now Christianity had entered on its career. During Saul's absence from Jerusalem, subsequent to his educational life at the feet of Gamaliel, great and momentous events had taken place—events which were destined to affect, not the history of the Jews only, but of the whole family of mankind.

What were those events? Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified; had risen again from the dead; had ascended into heaven; and had poured out the promised gift of the Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Blessed were the effects that followed. Under Peter's first sermon multitudes were awakened, and to the little church there were added that day "about three thousand souls" (Acts ii. 41). It was the dawn of a new era in the history of the world. It was the commencement of a dispensation of grace

and mercy, brighter far than had ever previously been known.

But opposition arose. The Sadducees and the priests were highly incensed at the conduct of the apostles, for they declared that Jesus was risen from the dead, and the miracles they wrought in His name caused many to believe the fact. What was to be done? An attempt must be made to put down this preaching, and the apostles were dragged before the Sanhedrim, imprisoned, but rescued by an angel of the Lord; and when summoned before the Sanhedrim again, set at liberty, as we have seen, through the influence of Gamaliel. But the rage of the priests soon broke out afresh, and ere long they proceeded to acts of violence, and a persecution commenced of the most virulent and cruel nature, the first victim of which was Stephen, one of the seven deacons of the church, and a man of such piety, that it is said he was "full of faith and power."

Stephen was performing "great wonders and miracles among the people," when certain parties belonging to one of the synagogues of Jerusalem, rose up against him, and attempted to confute the arguments he advanced in favour of Christianity. "We cannot doubt," says Mr. Howson, "from what follows, that Saul of Tarsus, already distinguished by his zeal and talents among the younger



JERUSALEM, FROM THE SOUTH.

champions of Pharisaism, bore a leading part in the discussion which here took place. He was now, though still 'a young man' (Acts vii. 58), yet no longer in the first opening of youth. This is evident from the fact, that he was appointed to an important ecclesiastical and political office immediately afterwards. Such an appointment he could hardly have received from the Sanhedrim before the age of thirty, and probably not so early, for we must remember that a peculiar respect for seniority distinguished the rabbinical authorities.* Imagine, then, this pupil of Gamaliel, full of zeal for the traditions of his fathers, trying to confront the champion of Christianity, and to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Clever in argument, subtle in distinction, and ready in reply, had his cause been a good one, he would, doubtless, have been able to silence the advocate of the new religion. But he pleaded on behalf of error, and neither he nor the rest of the members of the synagogue, could "resist the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen spoke."

What was the result of these discussions? Did Saul yield to the force of truth, and acknowledge with candour that his arguments were refuted? No; his Pharisaic pride would not permit him to

* Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. p. 83, 2nd edition.

do this, and ere his haughty spirit was subdued, he must be awakened by a louder voice than Stephen's, and must experience bitter sorrow for the conduct he is now determined to pursue. Yet it cannot be supposed that the addresses of Stephen made no impression on his mind. They must have affected him not a little, and perhaps they prepared the way for that richer illumination which was ere long to burst upon his soul. But, alas! as yet, he is a determined opponent of Christianity, and even lifts his hand to persecute the followers of the Nazarene!

See him! False witnesses are suborned against Stephen, and, like his great Master, he is charged with blasphemy, and condemned by the Sanhedrim to be put to death. He is dragged out of the city, probably through one of the gates which led to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and there stoned. And where is Saul of Tarsus? He is standing by, and observing that deed of blood; nay, he is even keeping the clothes of the witnesses who threw the stones,* and thus giving his consent to the murder which is being committed. It was said of another individual of this name, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Now, it might have been said, "Is Saul also among the persecutors?" Might not

* See Acts vii. 58; xxii. 20.

better things have been hoped respecting such a man as he? They might; but Pharisaic prejudice and pride carried him away, blinded his mind, perverted his judgment, and seared his conscience as with a hot iron.

One of the gates of Jerusalem is still called St. Stephen's Gate. It is on the east side of the city, a little north of the area of the great mosque. Tradition says that Stephen was conducted by his persecutors through this gate, and that turning to the east, they dragged him down the rocky brow of the valley of Jehoshaphat, and thence southward across the brook Kedron, to a ridge of rock lying about halfway between the wall of the city and the garden of Gethsemane, where they perpetrated their murderous act.

What a scene it was! There is every probability that the act was altogether illegal, the Sanhedrim not having the power to take away life, and that it was a tumultuous outbreak of rage and violence. But how calm and dignified was the conduct of the martyr! Full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at His right hand, as if waiting to receive his spirit. And this is his last supplication and prayer, "That the bloodguiltiness through which the Israel of his day identifies itself with the whole of the bloodstained past might be forgiven;

that the ban which had hitherto included all of Israel's race under the displeasure of the Almighty, might be removed before the second coming of the Lord. And when he had uttered this prayer 'he fell asleep.' This cruel and shameful death, at the hands of fierce foes, in the open field, on the hard bier of the murderous stones, is there called a 'falling asleep,' after a display of that marvellous power with which the Lord from heaven had supported and strengthened His martyr under the pains of death."*

With what astonishment must Saul have heard the martyr's prayer and witnessed the martyr's calmness and composure! He consented unto his death; but his death must have produced a powerful impression on his mind—such an impression as days and months were unable wholly to efface. St. Augustine said that the church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen—that "if Stephen had not prayed, Paul would not have preached." And there is little doubt, that, though he continued to persecute Christ's followers a little longer, Saul was even now sensible of the power of Christianity to give courage and constancy to those who embraced it, if he did not already begin to suppose that, after all, it might be true. At least he might

* Baumgarten on the Acts, vol. i, p. 167. Clark.

have seen in the death of Stephen, reasons for calling in question the propriety of the conduct of the Sanhedrim; he might have seen that Stephen was not worthy of their cruel treatment; he might have seen that there was something in the martyr's cause worthy of respect and reverence; and he might have seen that he himself was taking a very doubtful course, and that to give his consent to a deed so cruel and unjust, could not possibly be pleasing in the sight of God. But the veil was upon his mind, and not until it was taken away would the truth appear to him in all its brightness.

"But in the fulness of his own time," says Dr. Aiton, "God sent forth his light and his truth into his darkened heart; and in all this he led Saul by a way he knew not of, and to all human appearance the very reverse of what, to man's wisdom, would have been the path. That he might become a protector of the faith, he is first made a persecutor of it; that he might become a great instrument of saving souls from the second death, he is first made a murderer of the body; that he might carry the light of the gospel into the dark heathen regions, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, he is first struck blind, and remains so three days." Yes; but we must not suppose that it was God's will that Saul should be

a persecutor and a murderer. He was not made such, but made himself such. God *permitted* him to go thus far astray ; but He did not *compel* him, or even *intend* him to do so. When men do wrong the blame must not be laid at heaven's door, even though subsequently their conduct may be overruled for good. Saul, though he sinned in ignorance, still sinned ; and when at length his eyes were opened, he saw and confessed his guilt, and deeply deplored it at the throne of grace.

"Devout men carried Stephen to his burial." The first martyr of the Christian church, his death occasioned deep sorrow and lamentation ; and some of his friends came to the spot where his murderers left his body, and taking it up, committed it, amidst many tears, to the silent grave. But it was the body only that they buried, the spirit was already in the bosom of its Lord.

And was Saul's appetite for blood appeased ? Alas, no ! He still thought Jesus of Nazareth an impostor, Christianity a delusion, and its disciples fanatics ; and "he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to prison." We picture him, full of animosity against the followers of Christ, going about the streets and lanes of Jerusalem, and wherever he suspected there were Christians, rushing like a beast of prey into the

house, seizing its inhabitants and dragging them away. Here, for instance, in a comparatively secluded corner of the city, is a happy family of believers who, though the persecution is raging near, venture to bow their knees in prayer, and to raise their voices in praise to Jesus as the Christ of God, when suddenly the arch-enemy of the cross approaches the dwelling, enters it without ceremony, and amidst the tears and lamentations of the family, seizes the father, and perhaps the mother, and cruelly leads them away to prison. We have drawn no exaggerated picture. This is Saul's own confession, after he himself had become a Christian. "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priest; and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts xxvi. 9—11).

It may seem surprising that such a man as Saul of Tarsus—one so well educated and so refined—could be capable of so much cruelty and injustice; but party zeal frequently gets the better of every

generous principle of the mind, so that, under its influence, men can commit the most atrocious acts without the slightest emotion either of pity or compunction. The history of the Inquisition in Spain and Italy, furnishes examples of men calling themselves Christians who could inflict upon their fellow men the most excruciating tortures, and not only be unmoved, but even feel a kind of fiendish satisfaction and delight in what they saw. But why, it may be asked, was Saul so bitter an enemy of the Christians?

He was, as a Pharisee, exceedingly zealous for the ceremonial law, both written and traditionary; but, as he thought the design of Christianity was to subvert or abrogate that law which, he conceived, was an essential part of true religion, he therefore believed that it was his duty to stop the progress of Christianity, and to bring back as many of its disciples as he could to Judaism.

Was his conduct, then, excusable, or was it to be blamed? That he was sincere in the course he pursued at this time, no one who reads his history can doubt. But sincerity is not the only thing essential to religion. The poor Hindoo who swings in the air by hooks driven into his flesh, or who casts himself under the wheels of the car of Juggernaut is probably sincere; but, however sincere, he is wrong, and his sincerity will, by no

means, atone for his sin and folly, or secure for him the favour of a holy God. Saul, then, though ever so sincere, was guilty of very heinous sin, and the more so, as he might have seen that he was in error, had he not suffered his pharisaic prejudices to pervert his judgment and to harden his heart.

The persecution in which Saul engaged failed, and failed signally, to accomplish the end he had in view. The more Christ's followers suffered, the more they multiplied and grew. The martyrdom of Stephen was the means of enkindling afresh the zeal and ardour of the church; and all the efforts of the Sanhedrim to put down the religion of the cross, tended only to its propagation and advancement. So it has been in later years, and so will it ever be. The world is still opposed to Christianity, and persecution is still rife against those who profess it, wherever, as in the island of Madagascar, for example, the civil authorities will permit it to break out. But it can never prevent the progress of the truth. It may seem sometimes as if, in the fearful conflict which is going on, the world would prevail, and Christianity be ultimately destroyed; but it is only for a time that it gains the advantage. Travellers tell us that when the tide of the Atlantic is just entering the mouth of the great Mississippi, a mighty struggle seems to

take place, and the river, rolling down in its majesty and strength, appears to bid defiance to the progress of the sea. But it is for a few moments only. Back goes the mighty river towards its source, and up and up rolls the mightier tide, until presently its influence is seen for miles and miles of territory, in the very heart of the continent through which the Mississippi runs. Such is an emblem of the progress of Christianity, opposed though it is by an hostile world. It must and will prevail, and will one day cover the face of the whole earth.

II.

The Convert.

“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?” (Acts ix. 4).

“I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts xxvi. 19).

“But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. i. 13).

“The mid-day sun, with fiercest glow
Broods o’er the hazy, twinkling air ;
 Along the level sand
The palm-trees’ shade unwavering lies,
Just as thy towers, Damascus, rise
 To greet yon wearied band.

“The leader of that martial crew
Seems bent some mighty deed to do,
 So steadily he speeds,
With lips firm clos’d and fixed eye,
Like warrior when the fight is nigh
 Nor talk nor landscape heeds.

“What sudden blaze is round him pour’d,
As though all heaven’s refulgent hoard
 In one rich glory shone ?
One moment—and to earth he falls :
What voice his inmost heart appals ?
 Voice heard by him alone.”

KEBLE.

SECTION I.

THE JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS.

WE have sometimes seen a beautiful garden stocked with the richest flowers and fruit-trees, and have stood gazing upon it with pleasure and admiration, when, suddenly, a furious storm has come down upon it and swept over it, scattering the leaves and breaking off the branches of its finest productions, and leaving it a scene of desolation and destruction.

So was it with the church at Jerusalem just after the martyrdom of Stephen. Upon that lovely garden which had been planted by apostolic hands and cultivated with apostolic care, a storm of persecution fell, by which its members were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.* The apostles only were left in the city, and deep must have been their sorrow on

seeing the fruit of their toil so speedily dispersed. But it was in this way that their efforts were to be rendered still more successful ; for just as the storm that seems to desolate the garden, bears some of its precious seeds and deposits them on a distant shore, so persecution was the means by which the disciples of the cross were scattered, and wherever they went they carried with them the seeds of truth, which, on virgin soil, sprang up and bore abundant fruit.

The Christians fled from Jerusalem into various parts of the country, and some of them went even as far as Damascus, the celebrated capital of the province of Syria. There were many Jews at this time in Damascus, and it is said to have been in the occupation of Aretas, king of Petra,* so that the

* How it came to be so, is thus stated by Mr. Porter:—" On the death of the Tetrarch Philip, his territory was annexed to the Roman province, which then bordered on the dominions of Herod, east of the Jordan, and on the kingdom of Aretas toward the Arabian desert. Herod was Aretas' son-in-law; but through his guilty passion for his brother Philip's wife he had, in the days of John the Baptist, divorced the daughter of Aretas. This act was the occasion of a war, in which Herod was worsted by the Arabian king. Tiberius, the emperor, hearing of the defeat of his friend, sent orders to Vitellius, then governor of Syria, to march at once against Aretas, and to send him to Rome either alive or dead. The Roman prefect made preparations to obey the orders of his royal master, but, when about to set out, news reached him of the emperor's death. Aretas was prepared to defend his kingdom and his life, and, finding that

fugitives probably thought that there they would find a refuge from the storm, in which neither Herod, Antipas, nor the Sanhedrim could molest them.

But Saul, as we have seen, had thrown himself into the arena with all the ardour of Pharisaic zeal; and as if magnetised by Satan, so that he could think of nothing else, his whole soul was bent upon exterminating Christ's followers. He was resolved to follow them everywhere, to track their footsteps like a bloodhound, and to drag them from their hiding-places wherever they might be. See him! He appears in the presence of Theophilus the high priest, and requests of him letters to the synagogues of Damascus, giving him authority, if he found any of the new sect, to arrest them and bring them bound to Jerusalem. Such letters are given him, and accompanied by a band of horsemen he sets out upon his errand.

He would probably take the road which lay through Neapolis, the ancient Sychar, in Samaria, and thence across the Jordan, near Scythopolis,

the Roman general had suddenly left the southern part of his province with a portion of his troops, he became himself the aggressor. From Herod he had little to fear; and marching across the plain of Gaulinitis and Ituræa, he reached and captured the city of Damascus."—"Five Years in Damascus," vol. i., p. 102.

a little south of the sea of Tiberias. From Scythopolis he would journey to Gadara, and thence in almost a direct course north to Damascus, over "the barren uplands which stretch in dreary succession along the base of Anti-Libanus."*

What feelings occupied Saul's breast as he rode upon his way? Some have represented him as perplexed with doubt respecting the propriety of his conduct; and we can imagine that if he thought at all of the martyrdom of Stephen, he must have experienced some misgivings. But there is no evidence of such misgivings in the narrative of St. Luke. Saul was blinded by his zeal, and thought of one thing only, the putting down of what he conceived to be a dangerous delusion. The power of fanaticism over the human mind is often most surprising. Saul was now "beside himself," or he could never have supposed that such conduct as his was either right in the sight of God or likely to succeed. Yet it has not unfrequently been imitated in later times, and even the nineteenth century has its advocates of religious persecution and intolerance.

The distance of Damascus from Jerusalem is about one hundred and fifty miles. It is the most ancient city of the world, and is mentioned in the

* Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., p. 104. 8vo edition.

history of Abraham, whose steward, Eliezer, was probably born in it.* Frequently is it spoken of in the Book of Kings, and in later times it was the scene of many a severe and terrible conflict, the possession of it being deemed of great importance by Greek, Roman, and Mahommedan, in succession. "The Turks" (says Rosenmuller), "account Damascus one of the holy cities, because Mohammed, having been carried up from Jerusalem into the ninth heaven, there to receive the Koran, descended again at Damascus. They also believe that the general judgment will take place there, and that Damascus will be the chief city of the future everlasting kingdom which is then to be established." The Arabs called it one of the four paradises of the East; and it is further related of Mohammed that as he viewed its splendour from an eminence, he hesitated to enter it, knowing that man can enjoy but one paradise, and not wishing that his should be on earth.

The extensive plain on which Damascus is situated lies open to the south and east, but on the west and the north it is shut in by the chain of Anti-Libanus. From this chain of mountains, flow copious and perennial streams, which are called in scripture, "streams from Lebanon," one

* Gen. xv. 2. Comp. Josephus' *Antiq.* 1, 6, 8.

of which is now the Fidsheh, probably the ancient Pharpar; and another the Barada, supposed to be identical with Abana. This latter was designated by the Greeks the Chrysorrhoas, or "the river of gold;" not, however, because gold is found in it, but because it constitutes the very life of the city. "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" said Naaman the captain of the host of the King of Syria. They were, and still are celebrated rivers, and to them in particular, does the city owe its fertility, luxuriance, beauty, and attractiveness. Many travellers have spoken of Damascus in the highest terms. Lamartine says, "I think that no place upon earth was better calculated to answer one's idea of Eden;" and Dr. Robinson, who, in his recent volume of "Researches," gives an elaborate description of the place, says, "The approach to it is most beautiful, whether from the ridge of Anti-Lebanon, or by the great northern road from Hamah and Aleppo, or also from the eastern desert." It is now a Mahommedan city, is full of mosques and minarets, and contains a population of 108,540, the greater proportion of whom are Muslims and Druses.

It possesses many splendid khans and bazaars. Damask stuffs are still woven there, as also are silks and cottons, and gold and silver thread is

manufactured to a considerable extent. "The commerce of Damascus," says Dr. Robinson, "is mainly either with Europe through its port Beirut, or with Bagdad, from which it receives the products of the east. The foreign houses are chiefly in Beirut, there being no English house in Damascus itself. There is a large number of merchants, both Mahommedan and Christian, who thus trade with Europe; and also more than twenty Jewish houses, which are in general the most wealthy. Between Damascus and Bagdad there is a large caravan, once and sometimes twice or more in a year, consisting of fifteen hundred or two thousand camels. The route is by way of Palmyra, and thence eastward, till it joins the caravan road from Aleppo to Bagdad. The Euphrates is crossed at Hit." *

Such is Damascus now; and though it must have undergone many changes since the days of Saul, yet then, as now, it was a walled city of considerable dimensions; then, as now, houses stood upon the walls, and in some instances, projected over them towards the open plain; and then, as now, the river flowed from the foot of Anti-Libanus, spreading verdure and beauty in its track, passing through the city, and transforming it into a lovely garden, strikingly in contrast with the sterility of

* "Later Researches," p. 457. Murray.

the eastern desert, over which the traveller would pass.

Open a map of Palestine and Syria, and trace the course which Saul and his companions took on this now celebrated journey. It will assist you in forming a right conception of the circumstances which afterwards took place; and in the study of scripture history, it is quite essential that its geography and topography be also understood. For this reason we have been somewhat minute in our description of this far-famed city, for there is no event connected with it, in Jewish, heathen, or Mahommedan annals, half so interesting to us as the one which is now before us, the conversion of the persecutor Saul of Tarsus.

SECTION II.

THE ARREST.

TRAVELLING in Saul's day, even on horses, was not very rapid, so that the journey probably occupied three or four days, the nights being spent in the towns or villages on the route. But the party has now arrived within sight of the city, resting "like an island of paradise, in the green enclosure of its beautiful gardens." It is mid-day, and the sun is shining in his majesty and strength, whilst "a hazy twinkling air, broods along the cool sand, and a slow and solemn sound, like the ringing of church bells, occasioned by the heated atmosphere, causing great tension on the drum of the ear," perhaps fills the travellers with some surprise. Wearied with their journey, covered with sand and dust, and parched with a burning thirst, they are now anticipating the refreshment of some habitation in the city, whilst Saul himself, still mindful of his errand, is thinking how terrible a blow he will, ere

long, inflict upon the followers of the Nazarene who have taken refuge in Damascus. But to the proud waves of the sea, God says, "hitherto shall ye come and no further;" and just at the moment the persecutor is arrested, for suddenly a light above the brightness of the sun,* fills the wide expanse, the leader of the band falls to the ground, and a voice, heard only by himself, addresses him in the Hebrew language, and says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

What a light must that have been which was above the brightness of the sun. Solar light is so intense, that Drummond's light, which is the most brilliant artificial light that has hitherto been produced, is 146 times less so, and when held between the sun and the eye appears only as 'a black spot upon its disc. Yet here was a light which eclipsed even the sun's, and that too, not when it was covered by a cloud, but when it was blazing forth in its mid-day strength. No wonder that Saul's companions, as well as himself "fell to the ground," or "stood dumb" with amazement. It was not on their account, however, that this miracle occurred, but on his who was the captain of that martial band. Hence, though they heard a sound, they heard not the voice of Him that spake. *He* saw a sight *they* did not see. He heard a voice

* Comp. Luke ii. 13.

which they heard not.* What did Saul see? He doubtless saw the person of the Lord Jesus; for in writing to the Corinthians some years afterwards, he says, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ the Lord?" And when Barnabas brought him to the apostles, he related to them "how he had seen the Lord in the way, and had spoken with him."† Yes, Saul beheld a real vision of Jesus Christ. And he was not in a trance or ecstasy at the time, but fully awake and conscious; and such was the impression which the sight made upon the mind, that it doubtless remained with him to the latest period of his life.

"For to the rest both words and form
Seem lost in lightning and in storm,
While Saul in wakeful trance,
Sees deep within that dazzling field
His persecuted Lord reveal'd
With keen, yet pitying glance."

And what did Saul hear? He heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."‡

* "They *saw*, indeed, the dazzling light, but *no man*, that is, no form and manifested person; they heard, indeed, the sound as of a loud voice, but they heard and understood not what was said." Stier, "Words of the Risen Saviour," p. 15.

† Acts ix. 27. Comp. ix. 17, and xxii. 14, &c., &c.

‡ The first words these of the risen Saviour after his ascension into heaven. See Stier as above.

“It is said,” observes an old writer, “that if a somnambulist, or sleep-walker, is called by his name, he will awake.” Saul was now a moral somnambulist; and to arouse him to a true sense of his condition, he is thus suddenly accosted by his name. The question of his Lord—“Why persecutest thou me?” is full of significance. It tells us that there is a kind of sympathy between Christ’s kingdom in heaven and his kingdom on earth; that when any of his people suffer *here*, there is a kind of sensation produced *there*; nay, that when His followers are persecuted, He himself is persecuted in them. He who injures a child of God and imagines that no one sees him or takes notice of his conduct, is much deceived, for Jesus himself observes it, and will one day bring him to account. Woe to the persecutors of the saints of the Most High! Their souls under the altar cry, “How long, O Lord, how long dost thou not judge and avenge our blood that was shed upon the earth?” and that cry will be answered in God’s own time, to the utter destruction of their cruel adversaries. “*Why persecutest thou me?*” It was a touching question. It showed how Jesus, though exalted to the Father’s throne, loved his disciples and was not indifferent to their cries. He felt their wounds—He sympathised with them in their sufferings—

He heard their sighs and beheld their tears. There was not one of His saints whom Saul had shut up in prison, or dragged before the Sanhedrim, or cause to be put to death, upon whom His eye did not rest, and whose cause He was not ready to avenge; and now the time had come when the arch-persecutor himself was arrested and taught the sin and folly of his course.

“ Ah ! wherefore persecut'st thou Me ?

He heard and saw, and sought to free

His strain'd eye from the sight :

But heaven's high magic bound it there,

Still gazing, thought untaught to bear

Th' insufferable light.”

It is no easy task to struggle against the convictions of the mind and conscience. “ Hard is it for thee,” said Jesus, further, “ to kick against the goad.” As the ox finds it difficult to resist the sharp pointed stimulus of the driver, so will it be difficult for thee to resist the power of grace. Not, however, that it would be absolutely impossible, for we know that there are multitudes who do this constantly ; but henceforth it would be at the sacrifice of his peace of mind that Saul would rebel against the will of Christ, as well as at the risk of his everlasting weal. And such is the position in which many stand in our day, who are

favoured with religious instruction and with the drawings of the Holy Ghost. They have to push their way to the abodes of death over the prayers of parents, the admonitions of teachers, and the warnings of ministers; and they have to pass close by the foot of the Saviour's cross, and almost within sight of the mansions of eternal joy. Are you, dear reader, resisting divine influence, and repelling from you the drawings of the Spirit? It is hard work, as you well know; and we would warn you of the terrible consequences which must follow.

It was in the Hebrew tongue that Jesus spoke to Saul—that tongue which had been spoken by his ancient people, in which nearly all the books of the Old Testament were written; and which Jesus himself had spoken during his earthly life, on the shores of Gennesaret, on the green hill sides, and in the Holy City. Saul understood it well, and he replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" as if he scarcely knew what to say, and yet was conscious that He who addressed him was the Lord. "From this moment, Saul, in his inmost heart, must have immediately felt an irresistible conviction, that the person which revealed himself to him from out of the supernatural light of heaven, was no other and no less than the Almighty Lord of

heaven. What else can the involuntary prostration of all who witnessed the vision signify, than the adoration of the creature before its Lord and Creator? consequently Saul addresses the vision by the name of Lord! He whom the glory of heaven thus shone around—He before whom all fell to the dust, is to him, therefore, the same being as appeared to Ezekiel, before whom Isaiah trembled—He who descended on Mount Sinai, and spoke with Moses, and who gave him the living word of the law.” *

Yet the reply to Saul's question is not “I am the Son of God,” or “I am the Creator of the world,” but “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest”—the man Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou hast supposed to have been an impostor—who was indeed crucified, but who now liveth by the power of God. How strange must these words have appeared to Saul! how bitter must have been the reflection that he had been persecuting the true Messiah! Hard it was indeed, to kick against the goad, now that the goad pierced his conscience; and he, “trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Up to that moment the impression made upon his mind by the sight was irresistible; but now he was left to

* Baumgarten, vol. i., page 223.

choose whether he would still prosecute the course on which he had entered, or yield to the convictions which now presented themselves to his mind. He "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," as he himself said on one occasion,* but laid himself at once at the Saviour's feet, and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That one question decided Saul's future history. It was the turning point of his life. It was the act of submission by which he voluntarily took upon him the yoke of the cross. It was still in his power to have rejected the call of grace, loud and significant as that call was; and had he rejected it, he would, perhaps, never have become the apostle of the Gentiles, as, in all probability, it would not have been repeated. But he obeyed that call, and submissively placed himself in the Redeemer's hands.

He had remained prostrate on the ground, as if paralyzed by the glorious vision. He was commanded to arise and go into the city, where it would be told him what he should do. But he was blind, and could see no man. His eyes were indeed open, but they were sightless, so that his companions had to lead him by the hand and conduct him to Damascus. The cause of his blind-

* Acts xxvi. 19.

ness was, no doubt, the brilliant light which had fallen on his eyes ; for, though the eye is constructed to behold the light, yet an intense degree of it injures its nerves and destroys its sight. Who can bear to look upon the sun even for a few seconds at a time ? And if the light of the sun is so distressing to the eye, much more must have been that light which Saul had seen.

But his blindness may be viewed as an expressive symbol of his natural state. Jesus once said, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and that they which see might be made blind." And here, as a great preacher observed nearly a century and a half ago, when preaching at St. Paul's, London :—"Christ gives them an example—a real, a literal, an actual example—Saul, a Pharisee, is made blind. Christ, who is about to infuse new light into Saul, withdraws that light that was in him before ; that light by which Saul thought he saw all before, and thought himself a competent judge, which was the only true religion, and that all others were to be persecuted, even to death, that were not of his way. Saul was struck blind, but it was blindness contracted by light—it was a light that struck him blind, as you may see in his story."*

* Dr. Donne's Works, vol. ii., p. 307. Alford's edit., 1839.

This loss of sight, as we shall presently remark more at length, was but temporary; for both natural and spiritual sight were ere long given to the convert, and he was to become the instrument of giving light to others. In the narrative of his conversion before Agrippa, other words spoken to him by the Lord Jesus, are added:—"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 16—18). Even in his blindness, therefore, Saul had light—the light of holy hope—for he doubtless felt assured that his vision was obscured only for a time, and that upon his mind there would be poured, ere long, the light of grace and peace.

Four distinct spots have been pointed out on the road to Damascus, each one claiming the honour of having been the scene of the surprising miracle. The first is twelve miles south of the city, near the ruins of a church standing on rising ground; the

second is six miles south on the left of the ordinary road ; the third is two miles south on the same road ; and the fourth, half a mile from the city on the east. Of this last, Mr. Stanley says, " A quarter of an hour from the walls of the city on the eastern side, the Christian burial-ground, and a rude mass of conglomerate stone, mark the reputed scene of the conversion of St. Paul. We were there 'at noon.' There was the cloudless blue sky overhead ; close in front the city wall, in part still ancient ; around it, the green mass of groves and orchards ; and beyond them and deeply contrasted with them, on the south, the white top of Hermon, on the north, the grey hills of Salihyeh. Such, according to the local belief, was St. Paul's view, when the light became darkness before him, and he heard the voice which turned the fortunes of mankind."*

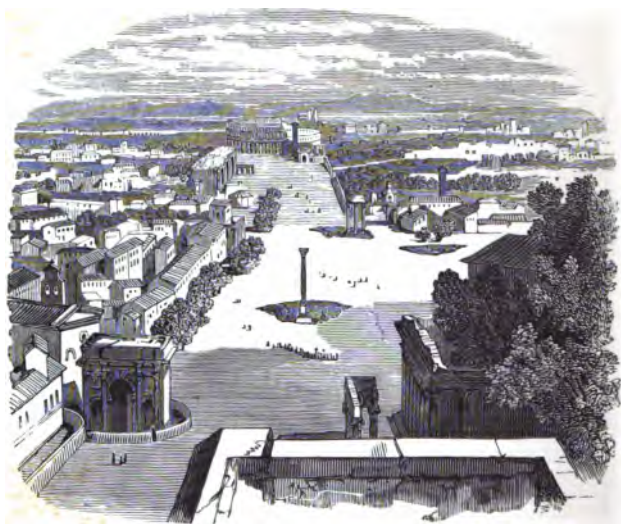
But the local belief in this case, as in many similar ones, is highly questionable ; and an eminent traveller and missionary, Mr. Porter, affirms that the scene of the conversion has been transferred within the last century from the west side of the city to the east, but that the event occurred, in all probability, on the western side, where there is a gate opposite the road which leads from the Jordan, and by which the travellers

* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 407.

would necessarily come. "In the days of the Crusaders," says Mr. Porter, "as we learn from de Vitry, the spot where the miracle was enacted was believed to be near the village of Kaukába, between two hills, about six miles west of the city, on the great Jerusalem road; and the tradition remained undisturbed for more than five centuries, for this is the place which was shown to D. Arvieux. This spot being too far distant for pilgrims to walk or holy fathers to conduct them, and besides, the whole western part of the city being inhabited by bigoted Muslems, it has been advisable of late to transfer the scene to the eastward." *

Such is but a specimen of the way in which the sites of many events celebrated in sacred history have been tampered with in course of time. To suit the convenience of pilgrims, or to please the fancy of holy fathers, ancient traditions have been set aside, and some new site fixed upon as the scene of some remarkable occurrence. It is not, however, of importance that we should know the exact spot on which the conversion of Saul took place; it is the event itself which is of so much interest, and of that it is scarcely possible to form too high an estimate, as it led to results the most important, not only to Saul himself, but to multitudes of his fellow-men.

* "Five Years in Damascus," vol. i, p. 43.



ROME.

The Camp Vaccini from the Capitol.

SECTION III.

THE CHANGE.

UPWARDS of three hundred years before the time of which we write, Darius, King of Persia, had deposited his treasure in the city of Damascus, hoping to save them from the ravages of war ; but Alexander the Great sent his general, Parmenio, to take possession of the city, whilst he himself went forward to lay siege to Tyre. Some of the treasures of Christ were now deposited in that city, and Saul had set out with the intention, not of seizing the city, it is true, but of laying his hand upon the Christians, and of carrying them captive to Jerusalem. And he had now arrived at its gates. But how different was his entrance into it from what he had anticipated. "There are many devices in man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." Not as a proud and cruel persecutor did Saul pass within the city gate, but as an humble penitent, about to join those very fugitives whom he had intended to destroy !

But, as we have seen, he was now bereft of the power of vision, so that he could not have found the way had he not been led; and when he was conducted into the city, he saw none of its beauties, and was charmed by none of its attractions, for from him, light for awhile had fled. The question naturally arises here, whither did he go on entering Damascus? and we infer from the narrative, that he was led to the house of one named Judas, situated in a street called "Straight." It is by no means probable that Judas was a Christian. Perhaps he was a person known to Saul, and one whom he intended from the first to visit. It may be, moreover, that Judas was expecting him, but expecting him as the zealous opponent of the sect of the Nazarenes. What must have been his surprise when he saw him at his door blind and helpless, and when he heard from Saul's own lips or from the lips of his attendants, of what had occurred outside the city? He was not unwilling, however, to receive the traveller into his house, and, perhaps, all the hospitality his dwelling could afford was freely offered to the now sightless but awakened persecutor.

But Saul could neither eat nor drink. He was now the subject of such bitter sorrow, that for three days his appetite failed him, and in darkness, solitude, and deep mental anguish, he fasted, prayed,

and wept before the throne of grace. He was now an awakened sinner, but not yet a pardoned one; and now it was that he experienced those struggles which he himself describes in his epistle to the Romans, and which led him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" How long would those three days appear! But they came to a close, and were succeeded by days of brightness and of joy.

There was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and, at the close of the three days, to him the Lord gave commandment in a vision to go into the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, "for," said Jesus, "behold he prayeth." "Go to him;" as if Jesus had said, "for thou needest not fear to do so. He was a persecutor, but now he prays." "We cannot describe the whole way of conversion more concisely, and at the same time more comprehensively, than by these words, 'Behold he prayeth;' for it brings the two things together—that conversion is God's work, but that it must have our co-operation. In prayer, we lay hold on God's good will, which had before laid hold upon us, and yield ourselves up to his mighty drawings."

On first receiving the message, Ananias hesitated, and said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this

man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem ; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts ix. 13, 14). This was not surprising, and it shows how sad a thing it is to have a bad character. Saul's previous history had preceded him to Damascus, and even on hearing of his penitence, Ananias was suspicious of him, and almost afraid to obey the injunction of his Lord. But the injunction was repeated, and Ananias was assured that Saul was a true penitent. "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Of Ananias we know but little more than that he was a "disciple" of Christ—"a devout man according to the law," and, therefore, by birth, a Jew, "having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt in Damascus."* Tradition, indeed, says that he was one of the seventy disciples, and that he afterwards became bishop of Damascus, and suffered martyrdom under Licinius, the governor. But he is never mentioned in St. Paul's epistles, and these traditions respecting him rest upon uncertain data.

* Acts xxii. 12.

“The objections of Ananias, and the removal of them by the Lord,” says Oldshausen, “display in a very touching manner the child-like relation of the believing soul to its Redeemer: the Saviour speaks with Ananias as a man does with his friend.” Yes, and glad enough, no doubt, was Ananias to have his objections removed, and to become the honoured instrument of receiving the new convert into the Christian Church. He was soon at the house of Judas (Saul having meanwhile seen a corresponding vision), and the very first words he uttered on seeing the now humbled persecutor, were indicative of his truly Christian spirit. Putting his hands upon him, to intimate to him that he was the man whom he had seen in his vision, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Instantly, “there fell from Saul’s eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith.” St. Luke was a physician, and as he generally speaks of disorders and their removal in very exact terms, it has been supposed by some that these words are to be understood literally; whilst others think that there was only a feeling in the eyes when they received the power of light again, similar to what usually accompanies the falling off of scales. This,

however, is an immaterial question ; the great fact is, that the power of vision was restored to him, that the prime-cheerer, light, poured its gladdening rays around him, and that darkness fled away. "The same hour," says Saul himself, "I looked up upon him," for the joy of returning sight was inexpressible, and all that he could do at first was to gaze with adoring gratitude to God on the instrument of his remarkable deliverance.

And now Ananias offers to baptize him. "Arise," said he, "and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16). Saul needed no further invitation. His sins were now a burden to him, and he was deeply anxious to have them washed away. He did not become a member of the church and a partaker of the blessings of the gospel solely by means of the wonderful calling which he had received from Christ himself ; he must also receive the outward sign of the inward and spiritual grace, and thus be initiated into the faith which he had formerly attempted to destroy. And baptized he was by Ananias, though Ananias was but a private member of the church ; and then it was that he received the remission of his sins—then it was that he was delivered from the body of sin and death—then it was that he could say for the first time, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation

to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”* In the water of baptism, “he was buried with Jesus Christ unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, he also should walk in newness of life.”† Not that baptism is regeneration, or that regeneration invariably accompanies it; but that in Saul’s case, the rite was received in the exercise of faith, and was, indeed, the symbol of a real work of grace effected in his heart. From that hour he passed from death unto life, became a new creature in Christ Jesus, and began to breathe the atmosphere of liberty, and peace, and love. “His body was strengthened with food, and his soul was made strong to ‘suffer great things’ for the name of Jesus, and to bear that name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”

Places are still pointed out to travellers as the house of Judas, the house of Ananias, and the scene of Saul’s baptism; but Mr. Stanley says, that they are not in the street now called Straight; and of that street he observes:—“From the southern gate a long wide thoroughfare penetrates into the heart of the city, now called ‘the Street of Bazaars.’ In this thoroughfare have

* Romans viii. 1.

† Romans vi. 4.

been recently discovered the remains of the only authentic locality mentioned in the history of St. Paul's stay at Damascus. Fragments of pavement and broken columns have been excavated, shewing the course of the 'Straight Street,' or 'Via Recta,' which here, as in all Syro-Greek, or Syro-Roman towns—Palmyra, Gerasa, Sebaste, Philadelphia (Aurmân), and Antioch—intersected the city in a straight line, adorned with Corinthian colonnades on each side. A few steps out of 'the Street of Bazaars,' in an open space called the Sheykh's Place, is the so-called 'House of Judas,' which contains a square room with a stone floor, one portion walled off for a tomb, which is covered with the usual offerings of shawls. In another quarter is shewn 'the House of Ananias.' Both are revered by Mussulmans as well as by Christians.* Other travellers who have seen the so-called houses of Judas and Ananias, tell us that they are vaults under-ground of ancient construction; but we can scarcely entertain the idea that these persons lived in dwellings of this kind, and

* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 408. Of this street, Mr. Porter says :—"There can scarcely be a doubt that this is the 'street called Straight' referred to in the history of the Apostle Paul. Its extreme length is about an English mile, and its breadth must have exceeded 100 feet."—"Five Years in Damascus," vol. i., p. 48.

the city has undergone so many changes since the days of Saul, that these traditions must be looked upon as of little worth.

It has been said that this event—the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and his transformation into Paul the Apostle—is second only to the mighty works of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. It was, indeed, *one* of their works, and furnishes one of the strongest proofs of the truth of Christianity to which we can direct our thoughts. This was perceived by an eminent nobleman of the last century, Lord Lyttelton, who was himself once an infidel, but who subsequently wrote a valuable tract to prove that the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul was of itself a demonstration of the truth of Christianity.

And he does prove it, for he shews that if the events said by St. Paul himself to have occurred at the time of his conversion did not actually occur, he must have been either an impostor, an enthusiast, or one deceived by others.

Was he an impostor? It is impossible to entertain the thought; for what could induce him to attempt to deceive, when, by embracing Christianity, he gained no temporal advantage; but on the contrary, lost everything—credit, ease, honour, property, and, in the end, even life itself? Mahomet was an impostor; but his object was the subjuga-

tion of the world to his sway by the sword. Saul of Tarsus had no such ambition, but counted all things loss that he might win Christ, and gain an imperishable crown. Had he been ambitious, as were many of the bishops, cardinals, and popes of later times, he might have gratified his ambition, no doubt ; for it was in his power to have moulded the churches he formed, almost as he pleased ; and he could have induced them, had he wished it, to place him in a position of the highest honour. But he never sought his own interests ; his grand aim was to exalt his Lord, and he was content to occupy the meanest place if he might but advance Christ's kingdom among men.

Was he an enthusiast ? Both his previous and his subsequent history render such an idea still more unlikely. Enthusiasts are generally, if not always, ignorant men ; but Saul of Tarsus was highly educated. Enthusiasts are usually credulous men ; but Saul of Tarsus was hard and slow of belief, for he had rejected all the evidences presented to his mind of the Messiahship of Jesus, up to the time of his journey to Damascus. Enthusiasts are invariably melancholy, vain, and self-conceited men ; but Saul of Tarsus, even when a persecutor, displayed none of these qualities, and as a Christian he was ever cheerful, ever humble, ever most retiring, accounting himself " less than

the least of all saints ; ” “ not meet to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God.” There was then nothing of the enthusiast—nothing of the fanatic about this extraordinary man ; and hence, to suppose that he was led away from Judaism and induced to embrace Christianity on such grounds as Simeon Stylites was induced to stand for thirty years upon a pillar, it is impossible to conceive.

Was he deceived by others ? This, too, was morally impossible. Who could deceive him ? His companions ? Ananias ? The Christians at Damascus ? Could they have produced the light brighter than the sun ? Could they have caused his three days’ blindness ? Could they have restored to him his sight ? All this is utterly inconceivable. But if Saul was neither an impostor, nor an enthusiast, nor deceived by others, it follows that his conversion took place under the circumstances recorded in his own narratives, or, in other words, was miraculous, and that, therefore, Christianity is true.

The impression produced by this event in Damascus was most profound. “ Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said—Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them

bound unto the chief-priests?" And amazed they might well be; for never was a greater, more sudden, and more decided change wrought in any man since the world began. It was literally a transformation. The lion had become a lamb—the foe had become a friend—the destroyer of the faith had become its advocate—the persecutor had become the preacher and the champion. How wondrous an illustration of the power of divine grace! God only can convert; and in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, we have placed before us the most remarkable instance of the operation of His Holy Spirit on the human mind which the history of the church affords. Yet think not, reader, that God is not willing to bring about your conversion too. In so remarkable a way as this, He will not bring it about, it is true; for any such miraculous display of Christ's power and glory is unnecessary. 'Convert and save you He will, however, if you listen to His word, if you obey the calls of His Spirit, if you repent of sin and believe in His Son Jesus Christ, as the one and only Saviour of mankind. "If you desire to have part in the mercy Saul obtained, do not expect as you seek God, the miracle he did not expect, and which would not have taken place had he expected it, but, like him, bring unto God a heart solicitous to know, and anxious to obey him. Then, though

you should be, which is scarcely possible, as blind as he was, God will reveal himself to you, and you will experience in return the truth of our Saviour's words, 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'" *

* Adolphe Monod.

SECTION IV.

THE FLIGHT.

SAUL's conversion was succeeded by an immediate entrance on his ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Having been baptized into the Christian faith, and having received the gift of the Holy Ghost, he could not refrain from proclaiming that Saviour who had so graciously visited him ; and hence, as we have already observed, he was presently heard, in the synagogues of Damascus, proclaiming Christ as the Son of God.

But he did not at once prosecute the task. He probably found that he needed, after so great a change in his views and feelings, time for reflection, prayer, and study, in some quiet locality, where he would not be interrupted by the world's loud din. Every one who is conscious that he has a great work to do, feels the necessity of previous preparation ; and we cannot but think that Saul felt it, and that he was unwilling to proceed with

his apostolic toil until he had carefully considered what he was about, and, by a fresh study of the Old Testament scriptures, fitted himself to defend the religion of the Cross.

Whither then did he go? He went, as he himself tells us, "into Arabia," and then "returned again to Damascus" (Gal. i. 17). Arabia lies considerably to the south of Damascus, so that the journey would be no easy one, and how Saul reached that country we are not informed. Neither are we informed into what part of Arabia he went—whether to the far-famed capital of Idumea, or, still further south, to Sinai, the Mount of God. In a mountainous country, extending from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf, was the territory of the Edomites and the Moabites of early times, to which, after its capital, Petra, was given the name Arabia Petræa. Petra, or the rock, which is called in the Old Testament, *Selah*, a Hebrew word having the same meaning, was situated in Mount Seir, and was literally a city hewn out of the rock, which is, to this day, an object of wonder to every one who beholds it. Saul may possibly have gone thither, and thus have become "a dweller among the rocks," or he may have gone to Horeb, where Moses received the law to give to the people of Israel, and where Elijah heard the "still small voice" encouraging him to trust in

the Lord Jehovah. In the same epistle in which he makes mention of his journey to Arabia, St. Paul speaks of "Mount Sinai in Arabia" as a figure of Hagar, the bond-maid of Abraham, contrasting with it Jerusalem, on Mount Sion, the figure of Sarah the free woman (Gal. iv. 22-27). What more probable than that the allegory was suggested to him by a visit to Sinai, where thoughts of this kind would be most likely to arise ?*

But all this is wrapped in obscurity. Of Saul's residence in Arabia we know nothing more than the fact that he was there. We are not even informed how long he remained in that country; and we can only infer from cases somewhat analogous, that he was there occupied in exercises of study and devotion, preparatory to entering on his apostolic mission.

During his absence, his friends at Damascus would, no doubt, wonder what had become of him, and great would be their joy, when, after an interval of some days or weeks, he returned to them again—for return he did, and for three

* Some have supposed, however, that by Arabia, Saul meant only the country in the immediate vicinity of Damascus. "Damascus and its territory belonged to Arabia in the time of St. Paul, and the whole of Palestine east of the Jordan was frequently included under the name." — Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography."

years Damascus was the scene of his ministerial toil (Gal. i. 18). There he again preached Christ in the synagogues; there he increased the more in strength; and there he confounded the Jews of the city, proving Jesus to be the very Christ (Acts ix. 22). Similarly did Luther, after his first enlightenment, entered into the convent of Espeth, where he was the subject of the severest mental struggles, but where, at length, he obtained peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ; and then removing to Wittenberg, where Frederick the Elector had founded a new university, he began to preach and to lecture with such effect, that the news spread far and wide, and soon the little chapel could not hold the hearers who crowded to listen to the words he uttered.*

And such, no doubt, was the effect of Saul's ministry at Damascus. The synagogues were probably filled whenever he was present, and the disputations he often held with the Jews, would be heard by many with the deepest interest. Marvellous was the change! The persecutor has become the preacher; and he who had attempted to destroy the faith, was now its powerful advocate and champion. To the Christians resident in Damascus, this must have been

* D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation," chaps. v. & vi.

a most encouraging circumstance. It would at once allay their fears, and it would tend to confirm their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Many a song of praise would doubtless rise up to heaven for the deliverance wrought out for them from the grasp of persecution, and many a burst of joy would be heard in their assemblies as they listened to the exhortations of the new convert to the faith.

But opposition arose, and Saul, in his turn, became the subject of persecution. "After many days were fulfilled," that is, towards the close of the "three years" of his residence in Damascus, which probably embraced the whole of the period from his conversion, the Jews, exasperated at the loss of such an agent, and grieved beyond measure at his embracing Christianity, resolved to kill him. A conspiracy was formed with this intention, and the governor, or Ethnarch, of the city, kept watch with a garrison of soldiers, desirous to apprehend him.* The Jews, no doubt, instigated him to this purpose; and hence, St. Luke says, that they "watched the city gates day and night to kill him."† Saul became, however, acquainted with their plans, and with the aid of his Christian friends, succeeded in eluding them. How did he escape?

* 2 Cor. xi. 32.

† Acts ix. 24.

In eastern cities some of the houses are built upon the walls, which they sometimes overhang into the road below; and in a house of this kind there were some Christian residents, who, probably in the darkness of the night, succeeded in letting Saul down in a basket,* as Rahab let down the spies at Jericho,† and as Michal let down David that he might escape from King Saul.‡ It was somewhat humiliating to be thus compelled to fly; but there are times when the servant of God must submit to such things, with a view not only to his personal safety, but to the welfare of the cause in which he is engaged. It was not cowardice that led Saul to leave Damascus, but prudence. He knew that he had a great work to do; and seeing that his life was in danger, and would probably be sacrificed if he stayed, he did not hesitate to flee, nor to adopt even such a method of escaping from the hands of his adversaries, as that of being let down in a basket from the wall.

Saul was to suffer many things for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and now his trials had commenced in earnest. He had buckled on the armour and had entered the battle-field, and many would be the perils he would have to encounter, the journeyings he would have to undertake, and the

* 2 Cor. xi. 33.

† Josh. ii. 15.

‡ 1 Sam. xix. 12.

enemies he would have to meet. See him now—a poor lone man, stepping out of the basket by which he has been let down into the open road! The night is dark, he has no companion, and before him is a dreary wilderness over which he must wander ere he reaches Palestine, and then there is nearly the whole length of that country to traverse before he arrives at the holy city. But on he goes, nothing daunted; and though, perhaps, exposed to the attacks of robbers, perhaps suffering from both hunger and thirst, he confides in that Saviour who has called him by his grace, and somehow or other, gets back to Jerusalem for the first time since he left it in the character of a persecutor.

Mark the value of firmness and perseverance. Many a man, in such circumstances, would have yielded to discouragement and fainted by the way. We often meet with young people especially, who, if called to endure hardships, complain, and if summoned to a work of more than ordinary difficulty, attempt it, perhaps, but give it up long before it is even half accomplished. How would they have borne the toil of that long journey from Damascus to Jerusalem? They would have sunk beneath the weight of its toil and of its care. Yet the courage and the perseverance of Saul carried him through it safely, and the same qualities

supported him in many subsequent trials of a like nature—and will support you also, youthful reader if you will but act under their influence. We would say to you then :

“ Keep pushing—’tis wiser
Than sitting aside,
And dreaming and sighing,
And waiting the tide.
In Life’s earnest battle
They only prevail,
Who daily march onward,
And never say fail ! ”

On Saul’s arrival at Jerusalem “ he essayed to join himself to the disciples ” (Acts ix. 26). Very naturally, however, they were afraid of him. They knew what he had been, and though they had perhaps heard of his conversion, yet they doubted whether it could be genuine, and hesitated, therefore, to receive him into their fellowship. This must have been a trial to him, for though he did not need the sanction of the church to his apostolic mission, inasmuch as he had received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus, yet he did long for communion with Christ’s followers, and was anxious to be recognised as a friend and brother. And his wish was soon gratified. Already Barnabas, who subsequently became one of his companions in travel, had recognised him as a

disciple, and by Barnabas he was introduced to Peter and James, the two leading apostles and ministers of the church.*

To see Peter, was one of the principal objects of Saul's visit to Jerusalem, and with him he abode fifteen days. Happy must those fifteen days have been! What hallowed converse would these servants of Christ hold together! Two such minds, bent upon one and the same object, and that object nothing less than the conversion of the world to the Lord Jesus, must, on coming into such close contact, have been like the blending of two altar fires, whilst each one's breast would glow with an intenser flame and be filled with holier joy.

It was not from Peter, however, that he received authority to preach the gospel, nor, indeed, from any of the apostles. Writing to the Galatians, he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). His intercourse with Peter, then, was not that of a pupil with his teacher, but that of an apostle with an apostle, or of a Christian with a Christian; and the rest of the apostles he did not see. His

* Comp. Acts ix. 26, 27, and Gal. i. 18, 19.

commission he had already received, and no man could add to his authority, or diminish from it.

In Jerusalem he spake "boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus;" but here, too, he met with opposition, for the Hellenists disputed with him, as they had previously done with Stephen; and when they could not contend with him in argument, sought to take away his life. What, then, was he to do? He had fled from Damascus because of persecution—must he also flee from Jerusalem? Yes; Jerusalem was not to be the sphere of his labours; but, far hence among the Gentiles was he to scatter the seed of eternal truth. As he was praying one day in the temple, he fell into a trance, and saw in a vision the Lord Jesus, who said to him, "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me" (Acts xxii. 17—21).^{*} He was reluctant to obey, for he thought of his former conduct and of the part he took in the martyrdom of Stephen, and hence he was anxious to bear his

^{*} In his address before Agrippa (Acts xxv. 14—19), St. Paul, blending together several different manifestations to him of the risen Saviour, refers to other words, not spoken either on his way to Damascus, or in the temple at Jerusalem. There was probably a third occasion on which Jesus spoke to him not expressly recorded in the Acts.—See Stier's "Words of the Risen Saviour," p. 46—61.

testimony to the truth in Jerusalem, and thus repair, if possible, the mischief he had done. But no: the command was repeated, and go he must, to sow, and reap, and gather in a harvest among the Gentile nations of the earth. It was enough. That vision cheered him, comforted him, and animated him afresh with zeal and love. There was no disposition in him to act the part of Jonah, and to rebel against the divine mandate. He was ready for whatever work his master might require him to perform; and his was a more gratifying task than Jonah's, for it was not to go and proclaim God's judgment on the nations, but to go and lift up the banner of the cross, and invite men everywhere to accept God's mercy and live.

We shall follow him on his journey in a future page, when we shall see him in the full and active work of the great apostle of the Gentiles. But let it not be forgotten that it was his conversion that prepared him for the apostleship; and that had he never become an humble penitent, he never would have become the successful preacher. Essential to usefulness in the church of Christ, is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; for, without these, talents of the highest order, and learning of the highest grade, are as worthless as "the sounding brass."

III.

The Apostle.

“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Cor. ix. 1).

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel I received is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. i. 11, 12).

“ Thy eloquence, O Paul, thy matchless tongue,
With strong persuasion, as with magic's voice,
From heathen darkness to the paths of light
Led the benighted wanderers ; who, like thee,
Through superstition's gloomy mazes strayed,
Till, heaven's effulgence bursting on the view,
To thy astonished and enraptured sight,
Revealed the glories of unfading day.”

BOLLAND.

SECTION I.

THE APOSTOLIC CALL AND DESIGNATION.

THE apostleship was the highest ministerial office of the Christian Church. It was originally confined to the twelve whom our Lord chose to be with Him, and to whom He Himself gave the name of apostles, inasmuch as they were ultimately to be "sent forth" into the world to preach His gospel to mankind. From this high office, Judas by transgression fell, and then one was chosen by lot to fill up his place, possessing these qualifications—that he had seen the Lord, and had been a companion of the eleven from the commencement to the close of Christ's public ministry.*

But now the new convert—Saul of Tarsus—is called to the apostleship. How is this? Does he possess the requisite qualifications? Has he ever

* Acts i. 21—26.

seen the Lord Jesus? Can he be a witness of the Saviour's resurrection? There were those in the church at Corinth and elsewhere who denied it, who called in question his apostolic authority, and who affirmed that, if he were a minister of Christ at all he could only be an inferior minister—an evangelist or a teacher. He was, therefore, compelled to assert his claims to this high office, and to vindicate his character from the aspersions cast upon it by his enemies. "Am I not an apostle?" he asks, when writing to the Corinthians. "Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ the Lord?—If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."* Yes, free he doubtless was—independent, that is, of the authority of others, inasmuch as he had received his commission immediately from Christ himself; and though he never saw Christ during His earthly sojourn, yet an eye-witness of His resurrection he certainly was, for Christ had appeared to him on the way to Damascus, and again in a vision in the temple of Jerusalem, so that he could say, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."† Yet it was not in the spirit of pride or vain glory that

* 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.

† 1 Cor. xv. 8.

St. Paul, as we must now call him, laid claim to this office. "I am the least of the apostles," he adds to the above, "that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

An apostle he was; but his designation was peculiar—he was "the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles." Others were to go to the circumcision; *he* was to preach to the uncircumcision. Others were to labour among the descendants of the three patriarchs; *he* was to have a wider commission, and to make known the truth among all nations of the earth.

The state of the Gentile world at the time he entered on his career may be very briefly sketched. Rome swayed the imperial sceptre over the greater part of the civilized world; but whilst she boasted of her wisdom, her philosophy, and her arts, and could point to her splendid cities, her magnificent palaces, her gorgeous temples, and her learned schools, she, as well as Greece, her rival, was wrapped in the gloom of a long long night which nothing but the light of Christianity could dispel. Infidelity and superstition divided the opinions of the masses of the people—infidelity which knew no god but nature, and superstition which acknowledged gods without number, and worshipped them under the most degrading forms. The

elder Pliny, for example, one of the greatest philosophers of the age, was all but an atheist, and affirmed that religion was only the offspring of necessity, weakness, and fear. "*What God is,*" he observes, "if in truth he be anything distinct from nature, it is beyond the compass of man's understanding to know. But it is a foolish delusion which has sprung from human weakness, and human pride, to imagine that the infinite spirit would concern himself with the petty affairs of men." It was man's vanity too, he said, which had led him to dream of a life after death; and the best thing that God had bestowed upon man, was the power to put an end to his own existence when he chose.

Many of the superstitions of the times were so foolish as to be ridiculed by men of sense; and almost all the religious rites which were observed, were libidinous and debasing to the last degree. For a picture of the *moral* condition of society, we have only to look into the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans; and should any one suppose that that picture is overdrawn, we would bid him read the lives of the Cæsars as depicted by Suetonius and other historians of the day.

There were, it is true, some that were longing after truth and God; for we cannot forget that Plato and Socrates had lived and taught. But with few

exceptions, even the wisest and most philosophic of mankind were in ignorance of the first elements of religious truth, and were groping their way in the midst of errors the most degrading to the human mind. In the second or third century, a story was written, which, though fictitious, was drawn from real life, and which represented a noble Roman, called Clement, who lived about the time when Christianity first appeared, as greatly harassed with religious doubts and fears. He resorted to the schools of the philosophers to obtain answers to the questions which perplexed him, but in vain—he visited Egypt, the land of mysteries and wonders, and sought for a magician who could bring up a spirit from the other world, but was bitterly disappointed; and in this state of mind he came in contact with the teachers of Christianity, and light burst upon his mind, so that he found the rest he sought.*

The world, then, greatly needed instruction, and the light was now about to break upon it, even that light which had issued from the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and had been diffused through Galilee and Judea by a few poor publicans and fishermen. It was to spread yet further, and was to reach Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and

* See Neander's "Church History," vol. i. p. 43-45. Clark.

even imperial Rome itself. It was to scatter the universal gloom, and to enkindle life in the valley of dry bones, although they were *very dry*.

But a man was wanted to go forth and lift up the standard of the Cross before the nations, possessed of very peculiar qualifications. He would have to visit the cities of the Gentile world—to enter there the synagogues of the Jews—to take his stand in the forum or in the public streets, and to appear before magistrates and kings as a witness for the truth. He must, therefore, be a Jew—a Pharisee—one thoroughly conversant with the Greek language, and, moreover, a Roman citizen. If he were not a Jew, he would have no access to the synagogues, and would, consequently, meet with the greatest difficulties as soon as he set out. If he were not a Pharisee, that sect, which had its representatives in every city, would stand opposed to him, and would refuse to listen to anything he had to say. If he knew Hebrew only, and were not acquainted with the Greek language, he would be deemed by the Gentiles as a barbarian, and as the Greek was spoken everywhere, would be unable to address them except through an interpreter. And if he were not a Roman citizen, he would be exposed to the unrelenting hatred of the Pharisees or to the unprincipled tyranny of magistrates and governors. Now, all these qualifications met in



THE JORDAN.

Saul of Tarsus ; and the Lord Jesus, who knew that they were requisite for one whom He should send forth upon this momentous errand, laid His hand upon this very man ; and passing by Peter, James, John, and the rest of His disciples, called and sent forth him to the work, as the agent most fitted to become a zealous and successful champion for the truth in Philippi, in Athens, in Corinth, and in Rome.

St. Peter, it is true, first opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, by preaching to Cornelius, the centurion, and his family ; but St. Paul stood by it and kept it open for the admission of the masses of the Gentile world. And in being called to this work, how greatly did he rejoice ! “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,” said he to the Ephesians, “is this grace given, that I should preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” And to the Romans he said, “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” He entered upon his work, and prosecuted it with unwavering faith, untiring zeal, undaunted courage, and undying charity ; for to the natural qualifications he

possessed were added moral and spiritual qualifications, which caused his whole character to shine with a lustre, borrowed from the Sun of Righteousness it is true, but so bright and glorious, as to have left its radiance on a considerable portion of the Gentile world.

The God of nature is the God of grace, and in choosing instruments for the accomplishment of His purposes, He has respect both to natural endowments and to spiritual gifts. "We may say of all the distinguished servants of God," observes Adolphe Monod, "that each of them has possessed his peculiar element of power and of natural aptitude, to which God has assigned its appropriate place in the counsels of His providence—this one, the gift of speech; the other one, the gift of writing; a third, the spirit of organization and government; a fourth, the art of influencing others; and the fifth something else." How wise is this! how beneficial! and how good! Let every one use the gifts bestowed upon him to the best of his ability, and he will fill up just that niche in the great temple of the church for which he was designed, and will thus bring glory to God and be of service to his fellow-man.

"If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice."

SECTION II.

HIS FIRST APOSTOLIC JOURNEY.

WE must now follow the great Apostle on his several missionary tours ; and, with a view to assist the reader in forming a conception of the scenes in which he laboured, we will attempt to present before him a series of descriptive sketches, in which St. Paul will appear as the leading figure.

In the vision which he saw in the temple, already referred to, the Apostle was forbidden to remain at Jerusalem, and he, accordingly, left the Holy City and paid a visit to his birth-place ; for “when the brethren knew,” says the writer of the Acts, that he was in danger of being slain, “they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.”* He himself says, “I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,”† whence Oldshausen and others suppose that Cæsarea Philippi is meant in the above

* Acts ix. 30.

† Gal. i. 21.

passage in the Acts, and that the Apostle went to Tarsus, on this occasion, by land. It is scarcely probable, however, that the brethren would go with him so far as Cæsarea Philippi, nor would going thither be called going "*down* to Cæsarea." Hence, as Howson and Alford think, we must conclude that he went by sea to Tarsus from Cæsarea, Stratonis, and that he visited some parts of Syria afterwards, and then returned to Cilicia, of which, as we have seen, Tarsus was the capital.

But we must, for a moment, look at Antioch, which now becomes the great centre of the Apostle's operations, and, therefore, a place of considerable importance. It was situated in an opening, formed by the river Oroutes, between the ranges of Mount Taurus and Mount Lebanon, and was one of the sixteen Asiatic cities founded by Seleucus Nicator, by whom it was called Antioch after the name of his father, or as some say, of his son, Antiochus. Being the capital of the Greek kings in Syria, it was a city not much inferior in magnitude to the modern Paris, and its public buildings were both numerous and splendid. It had its theatre and its amphitheatre, its public baths, its forum, its xystus or public walk, its circus, and its palace; and it is said to have been built on a regular and magnificent plan, the details of which no longer exist, but which Strabo, in the time of Augustus, describes

as a Tetrapolis, or union of four cities. Of these, Seleucia, which was situated on the plain by the coast of the Mediterranean, was erected first, and by this part of the city, Antioch, was in direct communication with the extensive trade of that memorable sea.

To this city Barnabas had been sent by the church at Jerusalem, and now, having brought Saul from Tarsus, they laboured together for a time and taught much people; and at Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians (Acts xi. 25, 26).

But these events were only preliminary to the Apostle's great mission, and, therefore, though full of interest, we shall not dwell upon them at length; neither shall we do more than refer to the visit of Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to carry the contributions of the Christians at Antioch to their brethren in that city, who were suffering in consequence of a severe dearth, which occurred in the days of Claudius Cæsar.* We shall hasten rather to follow them to Cyprus and elsewhere, whither they went, as St. Luke informs us, accompanied by the blessing and the prayers of certain prophets and teachers that were at Antioch, to whom a revelation was made by the

* Acts xi. 27—30.

Holy Spirit, that Barnabas and Paul should be separated for a work to which He had called them.

And now these ministers of light are fairly on their way to the Gentile work. They have arrived at Seleucia, and there they step on board a vessel whose destination is Cyprus; and after a voyage to the south-west of about a hundred miles, that celebrated island appears in view, and ere long they enter the narrow port of Salamis, and soon find themselves in the midst of the noisy town.* To Barnabas it is well known, for Cyprus was his birthplace, and we may conceive that to him this visit is full of interest, and that he longs to proclaim to his countrymen the glad tidings of the grace of God.

Cyprus was celebrated in ancient times for its mines of copper, its precious stones, its wine, oil, and honey, and its beautiful and fragrant flowers. It was originally peopled by the Phœnicians, but became subject in turn to the Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; and in the time of the apostles, it was a Roman province governed by a proprætor, who was called a Proconsul.† Christianity had already been introduced into the island

* Acts xiii. 4.

† See Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography;" and Conybeare and Howson's "St. Paul," vol. i.

by some of the refugees who left Jerusalem at the breaking out of the persecution subsequent to the death of Stephen ; and hence the Jews of Salamis, who were somewhat numerous, were prepared to listen to the heralds of the cross, who accordingly preached the word of God in their synagogues. But their stay was not protracted. They hastened from Salamis to the other end of the island, where lay the town of Paphos, the residence of the Roman governor.

Sergius Paulus, for such was the Proconsul's name, was a prudent man ; and, being desirous to hear the word of God, he sent for Barnabas and Paul, who were no doubt glad of the opportunity of preaching unto him Jesus. But the arts of sorcery were extensively practised in those days, and one who pretended to be a prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, but who called himself " Elymas," or " The Wise," had found his way to Paphos, and had already obtained some influence over the mind of the Proconsul. This man opposed the heralds of the Cross, fearing, perhaps, that they would make a convert of the governor, and thus lessen his influence among the people generally. Paul nobly withstood him ; he was miraculously struck blind for a season, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. Sergius Paulus saw in this event the power of

God, and he became one of the earliest believers of Christianity belonging to the Gentile world.

Thus were the seeds of eternal truth sown in this celebrated island of the Mediterranean, and thus did those seeds give promise of valuable fruit. But as the sower stops not in his field until the seed he scatters begins to ripen, but hastens on, while the seed-time lasts, to sow in other fields, so Barnabas and Paul, knowing that a momentous work was before them, proceeded on their way. From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, leaving behind them there one who had hitherto accompanied them—John Mark, who, though he was a relative of Barnabas, and had assisted the apostles in their missionary work, having come thus far, probably became faint hearted, and returned to Jerusalem.* This conduct was highly reprehensible; and hence, at a later period, Paul would not accept him as a companion on his journey,† yet later still, his confidence in him seems to have been restored.‡

The scene now changes. Paul and his companion are again on the continent of Asia Minor, and, having arrived at Perga, are about to pursue their journey through a country infested by bands of robbers, and, probably, to encounter no small

* Acts xiii. 13. † Acts xv. 37, 38. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

“perils.” Through rugged mountain passes, and over large and flooded rivers which also render their progress dangerous, these intrepid soldiers of the Cross pursue their way; but He, whose presence is alike “in the void waste as in the city full,” protects them and renews their strength, and, ere long, they enter Antioch in Pisidia, which modern research identifies with Ya-labatch, on the southern side of a mountain ridge stretching between Pisidia and Lycaonia.*

This town was also founded by Seleucus, and from the description of its remains given by Mr. Hamilton, must at one time have been a city of considerable dimensions. It was now a Roman colony, and its population consisted of Greeks, Romans, Pisidians, and Jews. The latter, and their proselytes, met on the sabbath in the synagogue, for the reading of the law and the prophets; and here, as their custom was, Paul and Barnabas came and sat down. An opportunity was soon afforded them to speak, and Paul rose and addressed the assembly. His discourse consisted of a brief outline of the history of the Jews, of a declaration of the fact of Christ's death and resurrection, and of a gracious offer of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the name of the risen Saviour. Such was

* See Arundell's "Asia Minor," and Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. p. 204, etc., 8vo edit.

the effect of this discourse that the next sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God; and, though many of the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, some of the Gentile proselytes believed, and to the Gentiles who were not proselytes, Paul and Barnabas also offered everlasting life.

Persecution then assailed these heralds of the Cross and they were driven from the city, the dust of which they shook from off their feet as a testimony against the Jews. They left behind them, however, a number of disciples, of whom it is said that they were "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

The scene again changes. They have travelled across bare uplands nearly a hundred miles eastward, and are now at Iconium, the capital of Lycaonia, situated at the foot of Mount Taurus, on the border of the Lake Trogitis. Iconium is now represented by a town called Konieh, which, a few centuries ago, was celebrated as the capital of the Seljukian Sultans, who built it on the site of the ancient city. When visited by St. Paul it was not a Roman colony, but is said to have become one at a later period.

And what course do Paul and Barnabas adopt at Iconium? As at Antioch, they first enter the Jewish synagogue, and there also they so speak

that many, both of the Jews and Greeks, believe ; and though opposition arises they boldly meet it, and continuing in the city for a considerable time, the Lord gives "testimony unto the word of His grace," and grants "signs and wonders to be done by their hands." But at length they are compelled to retire, for they hear that their enemies have resolved to stone them, and they make their escape and proceed to "Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and into the region that lieth round about." *

The sites of Lystra and Derbe have not yet been discovered ; but they probably lay south-eastward of Iconium, in the neighbourhood of "a singular mountain mass," called the "Kara Dagħ" or "Black Mount," and were country towns or villages, inhabited by a rude and barbarous population. At Lystra, Paul healed a man who had been a cripple from the womb, when the people, seeing what was done, cried out in their provincial dialect, "the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men," and "they called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker." † It was a common opinion among both Greeks and Romans, that the gods occasionally visited the earth in the form of men ; and in their mythologies,

* Acts xiv. 1—6.

† Acts xiv. 8—18.

Jupiter, "the father of gods and men," is usually represented as attended by Mercury, the companion, messenger, or servant of the gods. Mercury was the prince of orators ; and as Paul was the chief spokesman, these unsophisticated Lystrians naturally concluded that he was the god of speech, and that Barnabas on the other hand, was Jupiter, the god of power. What followed? The priest of Jupiter brought oxen to offer up in sacrifice to their visitors, and garlands to deck the gates of the temple, and large numbers of people having come together, in a few moments the victims would have been slain in honour of Barnabas and Paul. As the people spake in their own dialect, the apostles did not at first perceive their object, but presently it occurred to them ; when, filled with horror at the thought, Paul, in a most beautiful and significant address, endeavoured to dissuade them from their purpose. Scarcely, however, were they induced to desist, and, probably, they would be not a little angry at not being permitted to prosecute their design.

Hence, when certain Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, they easily persuaded the Lystrians that Paul and Barnabas were not gods, but evil-disposed men ; and such is the variableness of public opinion, that now they stoned the very man, to whom, with his companion, they would have offered sacrifices, and dragged him

out of the city supposing him to be dead.* Shameful was the former scene when they would have performed that act of idolatrous worship, but we can find some excuse for it on the ground of their ignorance. Still more shameful was this second scene, for it was indicative of the most barbarous injustice and cruelty, and cannot be excused on any ground whatever. With what deep anxiety would the disciples gather round St. Paul (and among them, in all probability was a young man named Timothy, who afterwards became one of Paul's dearest friends and companions),† and with what intense gratitude would they observe in him the signs of returning consciousness, and see him rise up from the ground but little injured by his wounds! Doubtless the hand of God had warded off such blows as would have proved fatal; and now he was ready to prosecute his journey, and to suffer yet again for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

“When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another,” was Christ's command to His disciples; and in accordance with this injunction, Paul and Barnabas now proceeded to Derbe, a small town in Isauria, once the residence of a celebrated robber named Antipater, who was defeated and slain by Amyntas, King of Galatia. The exact

* Acts xiv. 19, 20.

† Acts xvi. 1.

position of this town is still a matter of uncertainty, but it was probably about eighteen miles east of Lystra; and Hamilton supposes that it is now represented by a place called Divle, situated somewhat to the south of the lake *Ak Ghieul*.* Here also these heralds of the Cross "preached the gospel," and "taught many;" and then, fearless of danger and regardless of toil, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples," and "ordaining elders in every church."†

What courage, fortitude, and zeal, must these apostles have possessed! Ordinary men would have shrunk from these hardships; and after meeting with such opposition in these places, would scarcely have thought of visiting them again. But Paul and Barnabas were not ordinary men, but men "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, but were willing to sacrifice them for the furtherance of the gospel. And God honoured them and set his seal to their ministry. Many were their converts during this first missionary tour, and when they were about to leave them they prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord. They then

* See Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," vol. i.

† Acts xiv. 22, 23.

went down to Attalia, a city of Pamphylia, now Adalia, the largest place on the south coast of Asia Minor, and thence they sailed for Antioch in Syria, "whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled" (Acts xiv. 26).

This first missionary journey of St. Paul was performed in the year 44 or 45 A.D., and was of such importance and of such interest, that when he and Barnabas arrived at Antioch, they "gathered the church together, and rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." What a narrative that must have been! and how deep an impression it must have made on the minds of those who listened to its recital! It would fill their hearts with gladness, and would greatly tend to confirm them in the faith.

SECTION III.

HIS SECOND APOSTOLIC JOURNEY.

A CHRISTIAN missionary who has once visited the heathen world, and there witnessed the power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, longs to return to it as soon as possible. He feels that though it is pleasant to return to his country and his friends, and would be very agreeable to flesh and blood to remain at home, yet his work lies elsewhere, and that, therefore, he must, if circumstances permit, go again into distant lands, and brave whatever toils or dangers he may meet with there. Of such disinterested zeal, the history of modern missions furnishes several illustrious examples; but the pattern of these is found in the life of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

He had been some time at Antioch, had paid a visit to Jerusalem on a most important question—that of the circumcision of Gentile converts—and had returned to Antioch again, when one day he

said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Barnabas was quite willing to comply with this suggestion, but he wished to take John Mark with him, a proposal to which Paul strongly objected, on the ground that he had departed from them at Pamphylia, and was unwilling to go with them to the work. Paul was afraid that Mark would display a similar spirit again, whilst Barnabas, on the other hand, probably entertained a better opinion of him. The result was, a contention between the two friends, so sharp that they "departed asunder, one from the other." Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Where these churches were, we are not informed; but there was doubtless one at Tarsus, and again, therefore, we may picture Paul in his native city, and imagine with what pleasure he would introduce his new companion to his converts there, and point out to him the scenes familiar to his childhood. But he stayed not there. Crossing Mount Taurus, he came again to Derbe and Lystra, where he found young Timothy, his "own son in the faith," "well reported of by the brethren which were at Lystra and Iconium." The father of Timothy was a Greek, but his mother was a Jewess.

Hence he had not been circumcised, and it may seem to some rather remarkable, after what occurred at Jerusalem on the question of circumcision, that Paul should think of requiring Timothy to submit to this rite. He did so, however, "for the sake of the Jews which were in those quarters," that Timothy might have access to them, and that their scruples respecting his religious character might be removed. Paul was about to take him into his companionship on the journey; but if he had remained uncircumcised, the Jews would not have listened to him, nor would he have been permitted to speak in any of their synagogues.

Paul now proceeds on his journey accompanied by Timothy and Silas, and as he passes through the cities, he delivers to the infant churches the decrees formed by the council at Jerusalem, namely, that they were to abstain from "meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication;" * and by his ministrations, these churches are established in the faith and increase in number daily. †

Very brief is the record of his progress through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia, nor is it certain what route he took, or what particular cities he visited. PHRYGIA comprehended, in early times, the greater

* Acts xv. 29.

† Acts. xvi. 4, 5.

part of the peninsula of Asia Minor, and was subsequently divided into Greater and Lesser Phrygia, the former comprising the southern portion, the latter the north-western. It is probable that St. Paul's journey was confined to the southern portion, and if he took the Roman military road, he may have visited Laodicea, Philomelium and Synnada ; but it is not probable that on this journey he visited Colossæ, or Heirapolis, for there is little doubt that the church in the former of these cities at least, was founded at a later period by Epaphras, and that St. Paul had not seen it at the time he wrote his epistle to it, when in Rome.*

GALATIA was a province of Asia Minor, situated to the west of Cappadocia and Pontus, the inhabitants of which were of Gallic origin. Its capital was Ancyra, which lay on the great road from Byzantium to the east of Asia. Another of its cities was Pessinus, celebrated as the seat of the worship of Cybele or Ceres, the great mother. None of the towns or cities of Galatia are mentioned in the New Testament, yet in one or both of them, St. Paul planted the gospel, and, in all probability during this journey. From his epistle to the Galatians we learn that they received him with great honour, "as an angel of God, even as Christ

* See Col. i. 7 ; ii. 1 ; iv. 12, 13.

Jesus," and that whilst among them he was taken sick, and preached the gospel to them "through infirmity of the flesh," or as some writers think the words imply, that he was taken ill whilst passing through the country and compelled to remain amongst them for awhile, in consequence of the affliction with which he had been seized.*

Here Paul and his companions "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia;" and coming to Mysia, they "assayed to go down into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." † By ASIA is meant here the western part of Asia Minor. MYRIA lay on the coast of Propontis or Sea of Marmora; whilst BITHYNIA was bounded on the north by part of the Black Sea, on the west by the Propontis and the Thracian Bosphorus, and on the south by Phrygia and Galatia. The Spirit had other work for these heralds of the Cross at this time, so that these countries were for the present left—Troas in Northern or Lesser Mysia being the only place mentioned on their route.

Alexandria—Troas, now represented by Eski Stanboul, was situated on the coast of Asia Minor, in a district also called Troas, which extended from Mount Ida to the plain watered by the Simois and the Scamander. This district was the scene of the

* Gal. iii. 13, 14.

† Acts xvi. 6, 7.

Trojan war immortalised by Homer, in which Agamemnon and the Greeks contended with Paris and the Trojans for the beautiful Helen, the wife of Menelaus.

Opposite Troas, and on the other side of the Ægean Sea, was the province of Macedonia, the original kingdom of Philip and Alexander. St. Paul was not ignorant of the moral condition of the western world, and was no doubt anxious to plant upon its shores the banner of the Cross of Christ. We can imagine him standing on the beach at Troas, and stretching his eye across the sea, wondering whether the Spirit who had not suffered him to go into Bithynia, would direct his way to Europe instead; when, lo! in a vision of the night, a man of Macedonia appeared to him and said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." It was enough. He understood that vision as intimation of the Spirit, and promptly he obeyed the call. In company with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, the latter, who is said to have been a native of Antioch in Syria, having probably joined him in that city, he went on board one of the ships then bound for Macedonia, and the wind being favourable, passed by the island of Samothracia, and reached his destination in two days. The travellers landed at Neapolis, the sea-port of Philippi, and thence proceeded across a high ridge of land to

that celebrated city, distant from Neapolis about ten miles. Philippi was so called from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great ; but Rome was now the mistress of the world, and this city had become a Roman colony. A few Jews resided in it, who, having no synagogue, were accustomed to worship in a building called a *Proseucha*, situated outside the gate on the banks of the river *Gagitas*. (Acts xvi. 10—12).

Paul and his companions joined them, and there the first sermon ever preached by an apostle in Europe was delivered. It touched the heart of *Lydia*, a seller of purple, from *Thyatira*, who at once received Christ's messengers as her guests ; and in that city other trophies of divine grace were won, among whom the *Pytho*ness, or damsel possessed by a spirit of soothsaying, and the jailor and his family were the most remarkable. How marvellously was the power of God displayed in the case of the latter ! Paul and Silas had been delivered by the magistrates of the city into his hands, and he had barbarously thrust him into the inner prison, and had made their feet fast in the stocks, when, in the night season, they caused the prison to resound with songs of praise, and suddenly the doors were thrown open by an earthquake. Alarmed at the thought that his prisoners had escaped, and knowing that if they had there would

be no escape for him, he rushed in, and was about to kill himself, when Paul, observing him, said, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Then conviction for sin flashed upon his mind—he saw himself a sinner—he cried out, "What shall I do to be saved?" He was directed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in a few hours he and his family were seated with his prisoners at his board, rejoicing in the mercy which had been manifested unto them. (Acts xvi. 11—40.)

From Philippi, Paul and his companions, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, came to Thessalonica, the principal city of the second part of Macedonia, built by Cassander, who named it, after his wife, Thessalonica. Here was a synagogue of the Jews, and here, for three Sabbath days, did Paul reason with them out of the scriptures concerning the Messiahship of Jesus. Many were his converts, especially among the religious Greeks and the chief women of the city; but again persecution assailed him, and again he was compelled to flee. He proceeded to Berea, a city on the river Astræus, where he found the Jews more noble, or better disposed, than those of Thessalonica; but the latter followed him thither, and stirred up the people, so that Silas and Timothy being left with them for awhile, the brethren sent him by sea to Athens.*

* Acts xvii. 1—15.

The Apostle had now planted his foot on European soil, and like a military commander who has gained a victory, was encouraged to advance and attack the enemy in his strongholds. It was a bold and daring step, however, to proceed to Athens, for, of all cities in the world, Athens was one of the most unlikely on which the gospel would make any impression. It was the heart of Greece, the birth-place of Plato, and the seat of learning, philosophy, and the arts. There heathenism had fixed her throne, and there temples and statues, which for magnificence and beauty have never been surpassed, presented themselves to the eye in almost every street. Yet St. Paul, who doubtless knew the character of the city, resolved to visit it, and landing at Piræus, the harbour of the city, he probably entered it by the same gate as Pausanias who visited it about fifty years after, and who has left a graphic description of his route.* See him! He scarcely stops to look at the splendid buildings, at the sculptured forms of Minerva, Jupiter, and Apollo, at the Pompeium, the Tholus, or the Odeium; but, his whole spirit stirred within him as he sees the city full of idols, he hastens first to the synagogue of the Jews, and there opens his commission, and then takes his

* See Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," Article, "Athens."

stand in the Agora or market-place, when he enters into conversation with such as will listen to him.

The Agora was situated on the west of the Acropolis, and was graced with the statues of **Lycurgus**, **Demosthenes**, **Harmodius**, **Aristogeiton**; there, too, was the **Stoa Basileius** or **Royal Colonade**; and there was the **Altar of Pity**, to whom "the Athenians alone of Greeks give divine honours." Surrounded by these and other works of art, the Apostle speaks to the groups that gather round him, not of art, of philosophy, or of science, but of the one true God and of his Son **Jesus Christ** our Lord. "What will this babblers say?" cry some; and others say, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." This last remark was made on the ground that he preached to them **Jesus** and the resurrection, these being the two leading topics of his discourse.

The parties who encountered him were certain philosophers of the **Epicureans** and the **Stoics**. The former belonged to a school founded by **Epicurus**, who was born at **Samos**, B.C. 342, who was virtually an atheist, and who taught that the world was formed by an accidental concourse of atoms; that there was no future state, and no judgment to come. The latter were the disciples of **Zeno**, who was born at **Citium** in **Cyprus**, lived between

B.C. 350 and B.C. 250, was shipwrecked near the Piræus when about twenty or thirty years of age, and settled in Athens, where he began to teach. The Stoics were pantheists. In their view, God was the world and the world God. The soul of man was a part of God, and at death would be absorbed in Him. The worship of images they condemned, and temple worship they despised. Reason was the law by which they professed to live; and he who thus lived was, in their estimation, a king and even a god.

No wonder that both these sects should deride St. Paul. What did *they* know or care about a Saviour? or what could be more repugnant to their views than the doctrines of the resurrection and of the general judgment? The Epicureans treated him with ridicule and called him a "babbler," or "a contemptible and worthless person,"* the Stoics imagined him one of many who came to set up the worship of some new deities. What followed? They took him apart from the crowd and led him to Areopagus, that there they might hear an explanation of his doctrines. Let us follow him to that noted spot. It is a hill close to the Agora, accessible only by a flight of

* *Σπαραμολόγος* lit : a bird that picks up seeds from the ground and makes a chattering noise ; thence a person who goes about talking in the streets or markets.



BETHLEHEM.

sixteen stone steps, where the supreme court of judicature has sat from time immemorial in the open air to decide the most solemn questions of religion, and to pass sentence on the greatest criminals. Its name—Mars' Hill—"Ἀρεὸς πάγος," originated from the story that Mars was tried there for the murder of Hallirhotius; and on its summit, or rather on its slope, was a temple to that god. Here, then, in the presence of the Areopagites, Paul stands alone, yet nothing daunted, either by the dignity of his judges or by the prevalence of idolatry which the scene before him indicated. "The temple of the Eumenides was immediately before him: the Parthenon of Minerva facing him above. Their presence seemed to challenge the assertion in which he declared here, *ὅτι οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοis ναϊὸis κατοικεῖ ὁ Θεός*, *that in TEMPLES made by hands the Deity does not dwell*. In front of him, towering over the city from its pedestal on the rock of the Acropolis, as the Borromean Colossus, which at this day with outstretched hand gives its benediction to the low village of Arona, or as the brazen statue of the armed angel, which, from the summit of the Castle of St. Angelo, spreads its wings over the city of Rome, was the bronze colossus of Minerva, armed with spear, shield, and helmet, as the champion of Athens. Standing almost beneath its shade, he

pronounced that the Deity was not to be likened either to that, the work of Phidias, nor to other forms in gold, silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device, which peopled the scene before him."—"Nothing could present a grander, and, if we may so speak, a more *picturesque* and *scenic* illustration of his subject, than the objects with which he was surrounded. In this respect, nature and reality painted at the time and on the spot, a nobler cartoon of St. Paul's preaching at Athens, than the immortal Raphael has since done."

In answer to the inquiry of his judges—"May we know what this new doctrine of what thou speakest is?" Paul replied, courteously:—"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all respects ye are most religiously inclined; for as I passed through your city and beheld the object of your devotion, I found an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye worship, though ye know him not, him declare I unto you."*

The existence of such an altar in Athens is attested by Pausanias and Philostratus, and it is said to have originated on the occasion of a plague.† "The oration of St. Paul before this assembly," says Neander, "is a living proof of his apostolic

* See Alford's Greek Test. on Acts xvii., &c.

† Wordsworth's "Athens and Attica," pp. 77, 78; 2nd edit., 1838.

wisdom and eloquence ; we see here, how he, according to his own words, could become a Gentile to the Gentiles, to win the Gentiles to the gospel." It is indeed "a master-piece of apostolic wisdom," as another writer calls it ; and though some, when they heard it, "mocked," and others were disposed to put off the consideration of such matters to another season, an impression was doubtless produced upon the minds of some, so that Dionysius, an Areopagite, was converted to the truth, and, subsequently, perhaps, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*

The Apostle remained in Athens for some time, for he waited there for Silas and Timotheus, the latter of whom, if not the former, probably came to him, and was then sent to visit the church at Thessalonica. Both these brethren afterwards joined him at Corinth,† which was the city he next visited.‡

"Athens aimed rather to represent the past of Greece, now degraded from its glory and prostrate under the Roman power ; but Corinth was content to be the capital of Roman Greece, the residence of the ruling Proconsul of Achaia. While in Athens, what was left of Greek science and wisdom still sought to maintain its pre-eminence, Corinth

* Comp. Acts xvii. 14—16 ; 1 Thess. iii. 1.

† Acts xviii. 5.

‡ Acts xviii. 1.

had abandoned itself to all the vanity and debauchery of sensual life. After its sack by Mummius, it had been re-established in all its former glory, as the so-called 'ornament of Greece.' Nor was she wanting in art and science, especially in that of rhetoric, as referred to in the epistles to the church which afterwards arose in her ; but the predominant characteristics of the city, as she was situated on the isthmus, with two harbours, were commerce, riches, magnificence, wantonness, debauchery. Not the goddess of wisdom, as in Athens, but Aprodite, the goddess of carnal lust (at least, as she had now become), had the most celebrated temple ; statues were erected to eminent prostitutes, as to Lais ; and the Greek phrase, '*to live after Corinthian fashion*,' was expressive of all extravagance of debauchery and riot."*

At Corinth, St. Paul became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla his wife, with whom he worked at the trade of tent-making. Here Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was converted ; and here, notwithstanding the violent opposition of the Jews, many who heard the word believed and were baptized. In a vision the Lord spake to Paul and assured him of His presence, and for a year and

* Stier, "Words of the Risen Saviour," p. 70. For a description of Corinth and an epitome of its history, see Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," vol. i., p. 674, &c.

six months he continued in the city teaching the word of God among the people. He was dragged by the Jews before the Proconsul Gallio, the brother of Seneca, the philosopher, and accused of teaching false doctrine, but Gallio took the Apostle's part and drove the accusers from his presence.

From Corinth, Paul, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, sailed into Syria, paid a short visit to Ephesus, and left them there; sailed to Cæsarea, and "went up" to Jerusalem and "saluted the church" in that city, and then went down to Antioch,* thus completing his first great missionary tour. Whilst he was at Corinth he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians, the first, in point of time, of the invaluable letters he left as a legacy to the church.†

* Acts xviii. 18—22.

† Conybeare and Howson, vol. i.; Alford's Greek Test., vol. iii.

SECTION IV.

HIS THIRD APOSTOLIC JOURNEY.

A THIRD time St. Paul visited the churches he had already planted, and with unabated zeal, again lifted up amongst them the banner of the Cross. On this journey he "first went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples,"* and "having passed through the upper coasts," he at length "came to Ephesus."

There had preceded him to this city an eloquent Jew named Apollos, who was a disciple of John the Baptist, and was only acquainted with his baptism. By Aquila and Priscilla, however, he was taught "the way of God more perfectly," and then, fervent in spirit and full of zeal, he went into Achaia and visited Corinth; and wherever he went, "he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."†

* Acts xviii. 24.

† Acts xviii. 24—28.

Such a pioneer was valuable, and St. Paul reached Ephesus just after the visit of Apollos, who, especially after he had received further light through the instrumentality of Aquila and Priscilla, had doubtless broken up the fallow-ground of many hearts. But there were some disciples in Ephesus who had perhaps heard Apollos ere he was fully acquainted with the truth, and St. Paul found them, therefore, ignorant of the doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost, and acquainted only with the baptism of John. Now John's baptism was a baptism unto repentance, not the symbol of regeneration; and when Paul explained to these disciples the difference between John's baptism and that of Christ, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Ephesus, which now became so important a sphere of operation in St. Paul's history, was situated in Asia Minor, on the coast of the Ægean Sea. It is said to have been founded by Androclus the Athenian, and at the time of the Apostle's visit, it was the metropolis of the province of Asia, and the greatest city of Asia Minor. A vast emporium of trade, it was visited by merchants from many cities; and some of its public buildings must have been of a very imposing character. Of these, the temple of Artemis or Diana, was so magnificent, that it was accounted one of the seven

wonders of the world. A temple was built in very early times, but it was set on fire by Herostratus, it is said, on the very night which gave birth to Alexander the Great. But when re-erected on a larger and more extensive scale, its length was 425 feet, and its width 220. Its columns, which were 127 in number, were 60 feet in height, and its total area was four times that of the Parthenon at Athens. The famous sculptor, Scopas, is said to have carved one of the columns, and the altar was filled in with the work of Praxiteles. One of the celebrated portraits of Alexander, painted by Apelles, adorned the interior, and the native artists of the city contributed many other rich and valuable ornaments.

But, magnificent as the temple was, the image of the goddess, which tradition said fell down from Jupiter, was nothing but a piece of wood very rudely carved in the form of a woman with many breasts. Yet it was the object of the highest veneration; and one Demetrius, a silversmith, made silver shrines for the goddess, supposed to have been small models of the temple, which were purchased by foreigners at a high price.*

A contest between the herald of the Cross and the devotees of the goddess Diana was sure to take

* See Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," vol. i. p. 833, &c. Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii. p. 80.

place; and accordingly St. Paul, who spent two years in the city, preaching first in the synagogues of the Jews, and then disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus, with the Gentiles, soon found, as doubtless he anticipated, that his ministry and its results would meet with no little opposition. Special miracles were wrought by his hands—evil spirits were cast out by his word—and thus considerable attention was drawn to his preaching, so that many heard the word and believed. Even some of the sorcerers themselves embraced the truth, and in proof of their sincerity, brought their books of magic and burnt them publicly, thus renouncing all confidence in the arts which they had practised; and when after the destruction of these books, they reckoned up their value, it was found to amount to fifty thousand pieces of silver, or about £2,000 of our money.

And now Demetrius, the silversmith, found that his craft was in danger, and calling together the workmen of the same occupation, he excited them to great wrath against Paul and his companions, so that presently the whole city was filled with confusion. Among the public buildings of the city was the theatre, and into this vast edifice the maddened populace rushed, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's companions in travel. Paul himself would have entered it, but the dis-

ciples, fearful of the consequences, would not suffer him. It was well they did not, for the people were now more like wild beasts than men, and when Alexander would have addressed them, perceiving he was a Jew, they drowned his voice, and cried for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." With great difficulty the town clerk succeeded in appeasing them, and at length the assembly was induced to disperse. That day's uproar, however, would be long remembered; but loud and boistrous as it was, it did little harm to the cause of Christianity, for the church at Ephesus flourished after this many years, and was probably visited again by St. Paul at a later period of his life. There, it is said, Timothy died and was buried; and there, too, rests the body of St. John, who, when he was in the isle called Patmos, sent to the church the first of the epistles to the seven churches of Asia.*

The entire period of St. Paul's residence at Ephesus was three years,† during which, however, he probably paid a short visit to Corinth.‡ On his return to Ephesus he wrote a letter to the Corinthians which has not been preserved. Subsequently he wrote the first epistle to the church at Corinth, in which he faithfully reproves its fallen members.

* Acts xix.; Rev. ii. 1—7.

† Acts xx. 31.

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 14; xiii. 1.

On finally leaving Ephesus, he went to Troas, where a door was opened unto him of the Lord,* and thence proceeded to Macedonia, and came to Philippi. Here he wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians, and then came to Corinth, where he abode three months.† At Corinth he wrote, according to some authorities, his epistle to the Galatians; and here also his epistle to the church at Rome was written, and sent, by the hands of Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea. Great was the honour thus conferred on this pious woman, and happy would she be to take the Apostle's letter to the Christians of the imperial city. It was a precious document, and was intended by the Holy Spirit, not for the church at Rome only, but for all Christian churches to the end of time.

The great Apostle now left Europe, and once more directed his course towards Syria. His voyage was full of interest. There accompanied him Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus, and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. Luke, too, was with him; but these went before them to Troas, and there waited their arrival. They sailed from Philippi, and in five days reached Troas,

* 2 Cor. ii. 12.

† Acts xx. 3.

where they remained seven days. It was here, that as Paul was long preaching, Eutychus fell down from a high window, and was taken up dead. Immediately Paul went down to him, and embracing him, said, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him."* Great was the joy of his friends on seeing him alive, and greater still was the moral influence of this surprising miracle on the minds of all.

The friends of Paul now sailed to Assos, which, by sea, was about forty miles distant from Troas, whilst by land it was not more than twenty. The Apostle himself, therefore, resolved to remain at Troas a little longer, and then proceed to Assos on foot, which he would be able to reach almost as soon as his companions. Having joined them there, he sailed with them to Mitylene, the chief city of Lesbos,* an island celebrated for its beauty by the Roman poets. The next day they passed "over against Chios," an island about thirty miles distant from Lesbos; the day following they arrived at Samos,† about a mile from which island is Trogyllium on the mainland, where the ship cast anchor the next day. The Apostle was anxious to reach Jerusalem before the day of

* Acts xx. 4—12.

† See, respecting these islands, Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography."

Pentecost, otherwise he would now have left the vessel, and again visited the church at Ephesus. But such a course would have detained him too long, so that he proceeded in the same ship to Miletus, a city of considerable renown, about eighteen miles distant from Trogyllium. Here, on the arrival of the vessel, he sent to Ephesus, which was between twenty and thirty miles from Miletus, for the elders of the church, who at once obeyed his summons, not expecting, perhaps, at that time, so great a privilege as that of meeting him. Most affecting was the scene which followed. His parting address to them was touching in the extreme, and when he ended it, "he kneeled down and prayed with them all," most probably in the open air; and, with tearful eyes and sorrowing hearts, they accompanied him to the ship, expecting to see his face no more. (Acts xx. 13—38.)

On the subsequent part of the voyage, Paul and his companions passed the islands of Coos and Rhodes, the latter once celebrated for its great temple dedicated to the sun, and for its colossal statue of Apollo, between the legs of which, ships could pass in full sail. Thence, they came to Patara, on the mouth of the river Xanthus, where they found another vessel bound for Phœnicia, in which they took a passage and sailed across the open sea, leaving Cyprus on the left hand, and at

length landing at Tyre, where the ship was "to unlade her burden." The distance between Patara and Tyre is 340 geographical miles, and if the wind was favourable, as in the month of April, it probably would be, the voyage was perhaps made in about eight-and-forty hours. At Tyre, the Apostle tarried seven days with the disciples. They would fain have persuaded him not to go up to Jerusalem, but his heart was set upon the errand, and with their wives and children, these disciples accompanied him out of the city to the shore, and there they kneeled down and prayed. Paul and his companions then sailed for Ptolemais, and these Christians of Tyre returned to their abodes.

Ptolemais, the ancient Accho,* lay between Tyre and Cæsarea, and with a fair wind, would be reached in rather less than a day. The little company made no stay here, but having "saluted the brethren," proceeded by land to Cæsarea, a distance of thirty or forty miles. There they met with Philip the evangelist and his four daughters, and here Agabus prophesied what would happen to Paul at Jerusalem. He, however, was undaunted, for he was ready, not only to be bound, but even to die for the Lord Jesus in that city, if such were the will of God. He and his companions, there-

* Judges i. 31.

fore, "having packed up their luggage," left Cæsarea for Jerusalem, several of the disciples going with them, for the purpose, it would seem, of introducing the Apostle to one Mnason, an old disciple of Cyprus, but now a resident of Jerusalem, at whose house he was to lodge.

It would be pleasant to linger on these scenes, if our limits would permit, but our object is to give a brief outline only of the Apostle's labours and travels. This journey was a most important one, and to James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, Paul gave in detail a narrative of what God had done among the Gentiles by his ministry. No apostle was now at Jerusalem, and hence James, "the brother of our Lord," was the bishop, or ruling elder of the church in that city. He was the representative of Jewish Christianity, whilst St. Paul stood forth as the apostle of the Gentiles. Doubtless, however, he would listen with interest to Paul's recital of the success of the gospel among the heathen; and the Apostle could point to several of his companions "as living representations of the power of divine grace from every region in which he had laboured among the Gentiles." * When they heard it, James and the elders "glorified God;" but a report having

* Baumgarten on Acts, vol. ii., p. 316, &c. Clark.

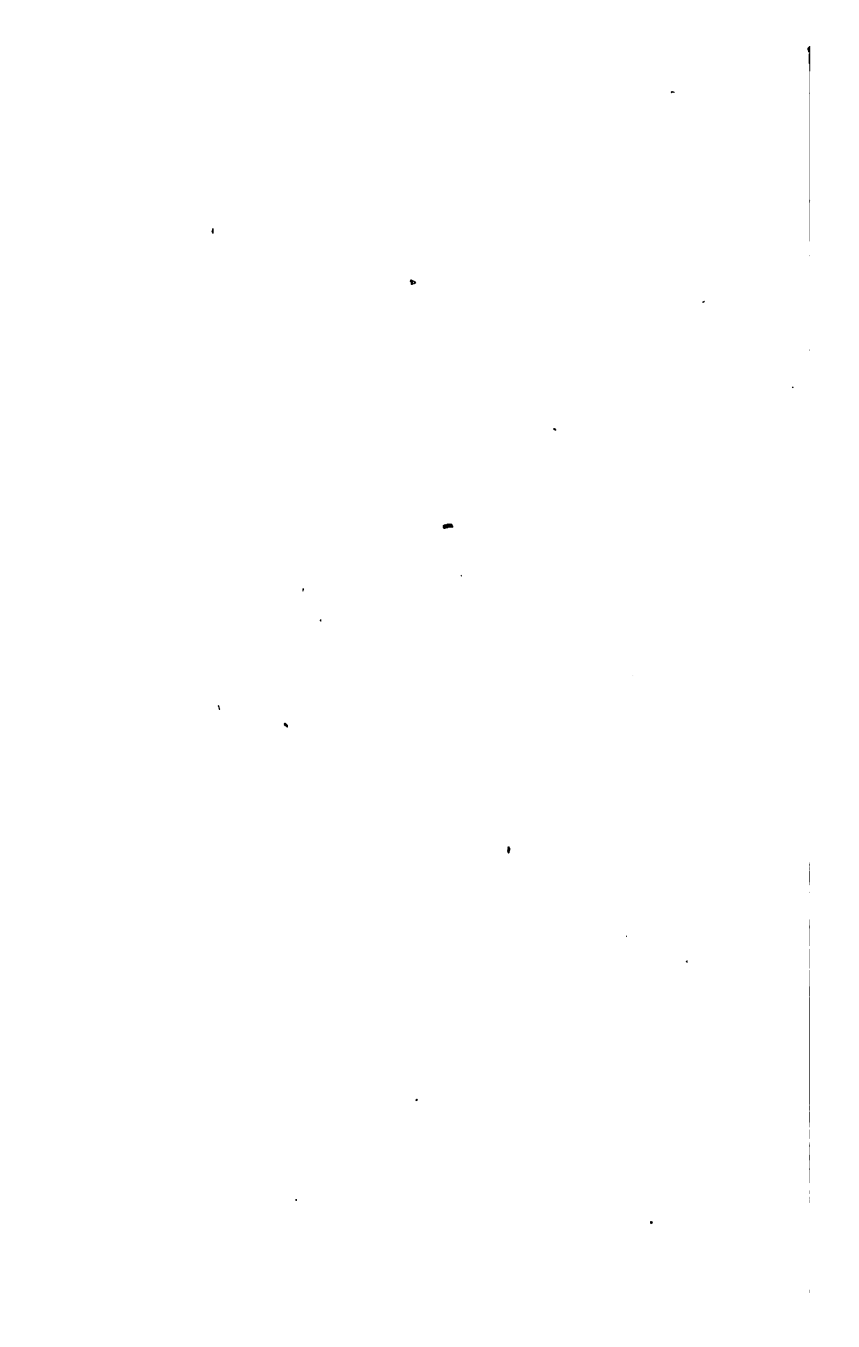
reached Jerusalem that Paul taught all the Jews to disregard the Mosaic law, he was induced to join himself to four men who were under the Nazarites' vow, and to become, as it were, a Nazarite with them. This he could do with a good conscience, as the vow of the Nazarite did not imply any reliance on the works of the law for justification,* and thus he gave evidence to the Jewish Christians that he still respected the law of Moses, though he placed no dependence on it as a means of obtaining the Divine favour.

In looking back on this brief survey of the Apostle's labours, we perceive at once, how ardent was his love, how intense his zeal, how untiring his efforts, and how strong his faith. Amidst numerous infirmities to which he refers in some of his epistles, and amidst many discouragements, many conflicts, and many persecutions, he prosecuted his arduous work with an assiduity seldom or ever paralleled, and with a charity which nothing was able to uproot. And his success was in some measure proportionate to his labours. Everywhere he was the instrument of winning souls to Christ, and everywhere he scattered imperishable seed which was destined to germinate and bring forth fruit in a future day. Some of the churches

* See Numbers vi. 21.

he planted, were, it is true, subsequently uprooted because of their unfaithfulness ; but the results of the Apostle's labours outlived the existence of these churches, and by his noble and most wondrous epistles, "he being dead yet speaketh." "In a few words : a Paul less in the world, it is the gospel confined for ages to the shores of Asia, and far remote from our Europe, the centre of whose conversion, and thus of the civilization of the globe, Paul has become next to Jesus Christ ; and a Paul less in the Bible, is Christian truth but half revealed, the Christian life but half understood, and Christian truth but half victorious." * Well, therefore, may "we glorify God in him," and adore the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which so fitting an instrument was prepared for the evangelization of the Gentile world.

* Adolphe Monod's "St. Paul."



IV.

The Martyr.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (Phil. i. 23, 24).

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. iv. 6).

**"In vain the Roman lord,
Waved the relentless sword
And spread the terrors of the circling flame ;
In vain the heathen sought
If chance some lurking spot
Might mar the lustre of the Christian name ;
The Eternal Spirit by his fruits confessed,
In life secured from stains, and steel'd in death, the breast."**

BISHOP MANT.

SECTION I.

PAUL'S FIRST IMPRISONMENT IN ROME.

ST. PAUL was a martyr long before he actually suffered death. "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death oft," he pursued his wondrous course, so that of him it may be said, that he lived a martyr as well as died one, always bearing about in his body the stigmata of the Lord Jesus.

That he was twice imprisoned in Rome is now the opinion of the best authorities. His first imprisonment in the Imperial city began, according to the received chronology, about A.D. 62; but Gresswell fixes upon A.D. 59, the fifth year of the reign of Nero; and Neander is in favour of a date still earlier. If it be admitted that he was subsequently set at liberty, it can scarcely be supposed that his incarceration was later than 59, for in the year 64, the great Neronian persecution commenced; and had Paul been kept in prison until then, it is

in the highest degree probable that he would have been sacrificed to the fury of the people.

On the occasion of his first visit to the great city, he went thither as a captive. There was already a church at Rome composed of both Jews and Gentiles, of which Aquila and Priscilla, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Hermas, Patrobas, and Hermes, with several others, were distinguished members. Long had St. Paul wished to visit this Christian community, that he might impart to it some spiritual gift; and feeling himself a debtor both to the Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise, he was ready to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome also.* He little thought, perhaps, that when he went to Rome, it would be "in bonds and afflictions," yet for his master's sake he was ever willing to brave the greatest dangers and to meet the mightiest foes.

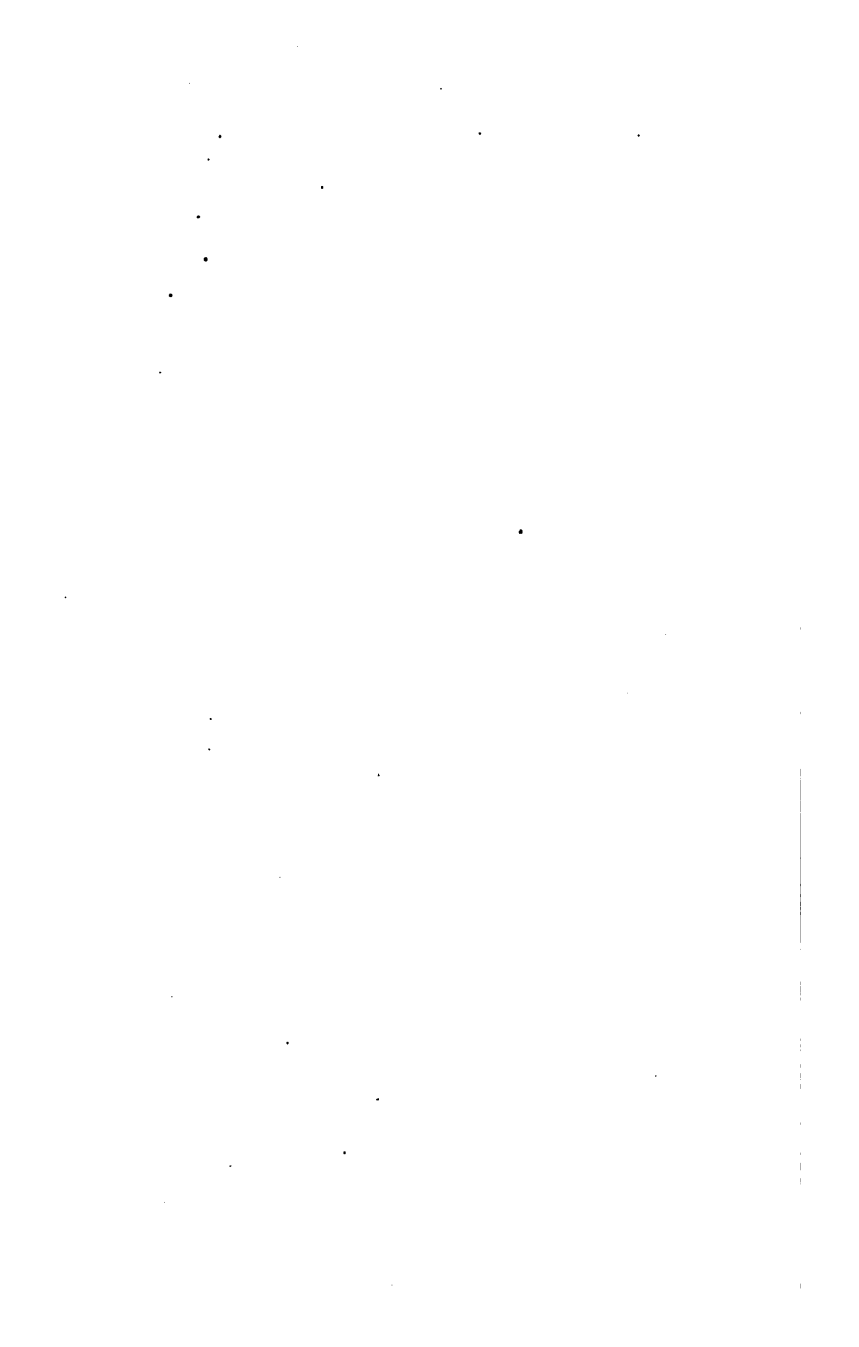
But whence originated his connection with the church at Rome, and under what circumstances did he become so intimate with its members? It is probable, as Tholuck observes, that the first seeds of Christianity were brought to Rome by Jewish residents of that city, who had been in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost,† or by some of

* See Romans i. 11—14.

† Acts ii. 10.



EPHESUS



the Hebrew Christians who were scattered abroad after the martyrdom of Stephen ;* or, perhaps, by the general concourse of strangers that continually streamed from the provinces to the capital. A variety of considerations would nevertheless lead to the conclusion that the church at Rome was founded by some of Paul's own converts. Whether Aquila and Priscilla were Christians at the time of the banishment of the disciples of the Lord Jesus by the Emperor Claudius, does not appear, but Paul met with them at Corinth and abode with them ;† and if they were not Christians before, they were doubtless converted there through the Apostle's instrumentality, after which they returned to Rome. Other members of this church are saluted by the Apostle in terms which imply the closest intimacy. Epænetus he calls his "well-beloved." Mary he mentions as having bestowed on him "much labour." Andronicus and Junia he describes as "his kinsmen" and "fellow-prisoners," and the mother of Rufus he hails as *his* mother also, probably on account of the tenderness she had shewn him.‡ That he should long to visit friends so dear to him is not surprising, and at length, though at the sacrifice of his liberty, his desires were met.

* Acts viii. 1.

† Acts xviii. 2, 3.

‡ Rom. xvi.

He had been accused by the Jews before Felix and his successor, and had, as a Roman citizen, appealed to Cæsar. He was accordingly sent with certain other prisoners by sea to Italy. The voyage was a remarkable one. He embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, a seaport of Mysia, on the eastern shore of the Ægean Sea. The vessel was bound for her own port, on arriving at which it was expected that another ship would be found in which the party could proceed to Italy. Leaving Cæsarea, they touched at Sidon, and were then compelled by contrary winds to run under the lee of Cyprus. With some difficulty they reached Myra, on the Asiatic coast, where the centurion found another ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy. He put his prisoners on board, and thence they proceeded to the Fair Havens in Crete, where Paul would have them winter; but the advice of the master and the owner of the ship was thought superior to his, and it was resolved to make for Phenice, another harbour of Crete, supposed by Mr. Smith of Jordan Hill, to be the harbour now called Lutro, which is open to the east. They accordingly weighed anchor and sailed close by Crete, with the prospect of reaching their destination in the course of a few hours. But now arose a tempestuous wind, or literally, a typhoon — *ανεμος τυφωνικος*—called Euroclydon, or, rather,

Euro-aquilo,* blowing, as that word intimates, E.N.E. Caught in this fearful gale, the ship was driven to the island of Melita, now called Malta, where it was at length wrecked, all the company on board escaping, almost by miracle, to land.

Here they remained three months, and here Paul was instrumental in restoring from a dangerous fever, the father of Publius, the chief man of the island. He then left it with his companions, in a ship of Alexandria, called the *Castor and Pollux*, and having touched at Syracuse, the far-famed city of Sicily, sailed thence to Rhegium, and thence to Puteoli, a maritime town of Campania in Italy, where they disembarked, and where Paul stayed seven days.

Puteoli was the harbour to which the Egyptian corn vessels were usually bound, and the chief commerce by sea between Rome and the provinces was

* This, according to several authorities, is the proper reading of Acts xxvii. 14, and not Euroclydon. Euros was the Greek name of the east wind, Aquilo the Latin name of the north wind; and in his able treatise on the ship-wreck of St. Paul, Mr. Smith of Jordan Hill shows that the direction of the wind was about half a degree N. of E.N.E., from which point it continued to blow till they reached Malta. It is evident from the narrative in Acts xxvii., that St. Luke, the writer of it, was one of Paul's companions; and Mr. Smith shows, in the treatise above referred to, that all the nautical terms employed, and the entire description of the storm and of the wreck are remarkably accurate, yet obviously those of a landsman, and not of one accustomed to the sea.

shared between it and Ostia. Here St. Paul met with disciples, and presently, no doubt, they communicated information of his arrival to the brethren in the great city. Between Puteoli and Rome was the Via Appia, the oldest and most celebrated of the Roman roads, originally constructed by Appius Claudius; and along this road, Julius, the centurion, at length took the prisoners, probably in some kind of carriage such as was then in use. The distance from Puteoli to Capua was about twenty miles, and thence to Terracina seventy miles. Less than twenty miles more brought the travellers to Appii Forum, a town situated at the end of a canal formed by Augustus for the purpose of draining the Pontine marshes, and up which it is possible the party proceeded in barges dragged by mules. Here a party of Christians from the city met the great Apostle; and at the Three Taverns, a little further on the road, another party appeared to welcome him. True, he was a prisoner, but he was the prisoner of the Lord, and, therefore, of his bonds they were not ashamed. Happy, on many accounts, would that meeting be, and, to the mind of the Apostle, cheering and consolatory. "He thanked God," it is said, "and took courage," for now he felt assured that whatever might be the result of his visit to Rome, and however his imprisonment in that city might terminate, he would

be sustained by the prayers and sympathies of the church.

Thirty miles from the Three Taverns, stood the far-famed metropolis of the Roman world. Its history up to this period had been wondrous in the extreme, and with that history St. Paul was, no doubt, acquainted. How strange must have been his emotions as, by the Porta Appia, he passed within its walls. On their arrival, Julius, the centurion, delivered his prisoners to the captain of the guard ;* but, probably, at the request of Julius, who had already manifested much kindness towards the Apostle, Paul was not committed to prison, for as yet Christianity was not proscribed, but was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him. This was a privilege, and yet, chained to the arm of one of the imperial body-guard day and night, he would necessarily be subject to much annoyance ; but he bore all patiently for his master's sake, and for two years he " dwelt in his own hired house, and received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." He attempted to conciliate the Jews who dwelt in the city, but the result was a division among them, for " though

* The Præfect of the Prætorian guards, whom some suppose to have been Burrus, one of the best of Nero's advisers.

some believed the things which were spoken, some believed not," and to the Gentiles, therefore, the Apostle turned, and the Jews departed from him.

The Apostle's residence in Rome was not without its fruit. He was bound, but the word of God was not bound. As well might Nero's servants have attempted to shut up the sunlight, as to confine the doctrines which Paul preached. Caught from his lips by those who visited him, his words were spread abroad through every part of the city, and at length reached the very highest station, so that his "bonds in Christ" were "manifested in all the palace and in all other places."* He had appealed to Cæsar, not so much on his own behalf as on the behalf of Christ; and now in Cæsar's household Christ is honoured, and brethren there send there salutations by the Apostle's letter, to the Christian church at Philippi. What a triumph of the gospel! Its advocate is in bonds, but it has "free course and is glorified." So is it ever with the truth. Its champions may be persecuted, imprisoned, or even slain, but it proceeds on its career, prevalent over every foe, and promising to attain universal empire. The gospel message may have reached the ears even of the haughty Nero himself, but, if so, he rejected it as Felix and Agrippa had done, and his subsequent career was

* Phil. i. 13.

stained with some of the most dreadful crimes ever committed by man.

During his first imprisonment in Rome, the Apostle wrote four of his epistles, namely—those to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon. In all of them he alludes to his peculiar circumstances, sometimes in very striking terms. The epistle to the Ephesians, which Coleridge calls “the divinest composition” of man, was probably written first. At the close of it he asks for prayers on his behalf, that “utterance may be given” him, that he may “open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,” “for which,” he says, “I am an ambassador in bonds.” To the Colossians he says, “Remember my bonds.” To Philemon, a member of the church at Colossæ, he writes, “But withal prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” But it is in the epistle to the Philippians that he speaks most freely on the subject of his imprisonment, as if, at one time, doubtful of the issue, he says, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better.” The crown of martyrdom was glittering in his view, and he already stretched out his hand to take it. But it was not yet to be placed upon his head; and, checking his aspirations, he adds, “Neverthe-

less, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you ;” and then he intimates that he shall abide, as if he had just been assured by the Spirit that he would in due time be set at liberty. In this epistle, he also refers to his temporal necessities, and acknowledges the kindness of the Philippians, who had often sent him presents ; for he had “received of Epaphroditus the things” that they had sent, “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”

The companions of Paul in his imprisonment, are more than once referred to in his letters. Aristarchus and Epaphras he calls “his fellow-prisoners,” the former having accompanied him to Rome, and the latter having, perhaps, been apprehended on account of his extraordinary zeal in the cause of Christ. Timothy, too, was with him, and Mark, and Tychicus, and Demas, and, above all, his ever faithful friend, “Luke, the beloved physician.”* These, probably, abode with him for a time ; and in their society, as well as by the visits of the Christians resident in Rome, he would be greatly cheered. Their prayers and conversations would doubtless have a powerful influence also on the soldiers who successively guarded the illustrious captive ; and it is not too much to suppose that some of these embraced the truth and became humble

* See Col. iv. 10—14. Philemon 23.

followers of Christ. To be chained to the arm of an unruly Roman soldier, would be extremely painful to the gentle spirit of the Apostle ; but the conversion of such an individual would be deemed by Paul an ample recompense for all he might endure.

Whether the Apostle stood formally arraigned before the Emperor during this imprisonment, the historian does not say ; nor is any information given us in the Acts in regard to the circumstances of the prisoner's release. The omission has been deemed remarkable ; but it must be considered that the design of the writer of that book was not to give a full account of the personal history of St. Paul, but only to relate the leading facts connected with the early establishment of Christianity. But was the Apostle set at liberty, or did his confinement terminate with martyrdom ? Against the latter opinion, which some have entertained, we have first the testimony of Clement, who was partly contemporary with St. Paul, and who, writing to the Corinthians from Rome, says, that Paul suffered martyrdom after he had travelled to the "extreme west." Now, by this expression, Spain was generally understood, and since the Apostle did not visit Spain *before* his imprisonment, he must have been released and have visited it *afterwards*.* We have also his second epistle to

* Comp. Rom. xv. 24.

Timothy, an epistle written certainly during an imprisonment in Rome, and yet from internal evidence, not written during the imprisonment related in the Acts. The inference is then, that the Apostle was set at liberty. "Christianity was not yet denounced," says Neander, "as a religious institute," and hence St. Paul could not be proved guilty of having violated the laws of the Roman State, and his appeal to Cæsar was successful against the charges alleged by his enemies the Jews.

After his release, which probably took place early in A.D. 61, the Apostle is supposed to have visited Asia Minor, Macedonia, Spain, Ephesus, Crete, and other places, and to have written the epistle to the Hebrews, the first to Timothy, and the epistle to Titus. This, then, was a very important period of his life. He was liberated that he might return to apostolic toil and apostolic sufferings; and greatly was the church benefited by the few years that were added to his wondrous ministry. God does not remove His servant from the church militant to the church triumphant whilst yet He has work for them to do. Though they may be ripe for heaven, and may themselves be on the wing to rise to it, they are detained on earth for their companions' good; and it is their duty to cultivate the spirit of the patriarch of Uz, who said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come."

SECTION II.

PAUL'S SECOND IMPRISONMENT.

As the sun appears sometimes to pass behind a cloud, and is for awhile hidden from our immediate view, but subsequently comes forth again in all his radiance and power, so do eminent men sometimes retire into the back-ground, where they are almost lost, for a time, to society and the world, and men begin to wonder what has become of them, and whether their names will be heard of any more. At length, however, they emerge from their obscurity, and once more appear upon the stage of history to bless mankind with the light of their example and the influence of their burning words.

If St. Paul, after his release, was not actually in retirement for the space of a few years, his history, as it has come down to us, makes it appear almost as if he was, for it presents a hiatus here, which it is quite impossible to fill up. But as the sun, when he leaves our hemisphere, shines upon the opposite one, so, doubtless, was Paul shedding light some-

The state of Rome, with respect to Christianity, was now somewhat different from what it was when St. Paul first went thither. Nero was still upon the throne, but he was detested by thousands of the people, for he wielded over his subjects an iron sceptre, and made society, heathen though it was, blush for the crimes he openly committed. He had imbued his hands in the blood of his own mother; in that of Octavia, his youthful wife; and in that of Britannicus, the rightful heir to the throne; and, if history does not belie him, he had, in the year 64, set fire to various parts of the city, and then to appease the indignation of its inhabitants, caused by the destruction of half their property, charged with the crime the followers of Jesus Christ. "Pretending," says Suetonius, "to be disgusted with the old buildings and narrow and winding streets, he set the city on fire so openly, that many of consular rank caught his household servants on their property with tow and torches in their hands, but durst not meddle with them. There being near his Golden House some granaries, the site of which he exceedingly coveted, they were battered, as if with machines of war, and set on fire, the walls being built of stone. During six days and seven nights this terrible devastation continued, the people being obliged to fly to the tombs and monuments for lodging and shelter."*

* "Lives of the Cæsars." "Nero," c. xxxviii.

The moving cause which led Nero, in the year 64, to vent his fury against the Christians, was originally nothing else than a wish to divert from himself the suspicion of being the author of this conflagration, and to fix the guilt on others; and as the Christians were already become objects of popular hatred, and the fanatic mob were prepared to believe any crime that might be charged upon them, such an accusation, if brought against the Christians, would be most easily credited.* And credited by many it doubtless was, so that the Christians were treated with the utmost cruelty. Some were crucified, some devoured by wild beasts, some wrapped in garments impregnated with inflammable materials and then set on fire to illuminate the circus of the Vatican and the gardens of the Emperor. In this way a great number perished, and for the mere profession of Christianity men were liable to be put to death.†

This persecution had partly ceased when Paul re-entered Rome, but he had doubtless heard of it, and deep would be his sorrow, as he thought of the sufferings of many who had been his former associates and friends. And now Christianity was a proscribed religion. Not as formerly, therefore, was the Apostle allowed to dwell in his own hired

* Neander's "Church History," vol. i, p. 129. Clark.

† See "Tacitus' Annals," xv. 44.

house, but was thrust into a dungeon of the Mamertine prison, where few could obtain access to his person, or even discover where he was confined.

It was in this prison that he wrote his second epistle to Timothy, and very touching are some of his allusions and requests. "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim. iv. 13). The books were probably the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the parchments may have been copies of his own epistles; but what of the cloke, and why was it required? Did "Paul the aged" feel the cold chills of the gloomy prison and wish for the cloke to screen him somewhat from the biting atmosphere? It is not improbable, for according to some, the word *φελώνης* is a corrupted form of *φαινολής*, which signifies a thick outer cloke, such as the Apostle would use in the coldest weather.* In the same epistle he makes honourable mention of Onesiphorus, who has visited him in prison and had given him much comfort. "The Lord give mercy to the house of

* We are reminded here of one of our English Reformers, good old "Master Latimer," who was imprisoned in the Tower of London, and was kept "without fire in the frosty winter, well-nigh starved with cold." History presents many such remarkable parallels. Latimer was ultimately burnt at the stake opposite Balliol College, Oxford, with Ridley, for his companion in tribulation and honour.

Onesiphorus ; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day : and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”* Onesiphorus was a member of the church at Ephesus, and during the Apostle’s residence in that city, had often ministered to him of his substance. Now he had come to Rome, perhaps to transact important business, and knowing that Paul was in the city as a prisoner, he could not rest until he had found him, and once more assured him of his love and sympathy. This was real friendship, such as only Christianity could inspire. Friendship, true and genuine, displays itself not only when the sun of prosperity shines upon the path of him it professes to regard, when his name is held in honour and renown, and he is the object of general applause, but when the cold winter blast howls piteously around him, when his reputation is assailed by an uncharitable world, and when he is left to contend with misfortune all alone. And such was the friendship of Onesiphorus for Paul. It exposed him to obloquy, reproach, and shame; but it was so deep, so ardent,

* 2 Tim. i. 16—18.

so sincere, that at the risk, perhaps of his liberty, if not of his life, it led the generous man to seek out the apostle of the Lord and Saviour and to visit him in his gloomy cell. Nor was St. Paul insensible of this kindness. Apostle though he was, and never bereft of consolation from the presence of his Lord, yet he deeply felt the attention paid to him by his friend, and prayed that both he and his family might obtain mercy in the day when all men shall appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

In striking contrast with the conduct of Onesiphorus, was that of some others whom the Apostle mentions. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." By Asia, is meant here pro-consular Asia, not the whole of Asia Minor. Many professors here, who had once loved the Apostle, now repudiated him, two of whom are mentioned by name, perhaps, because they had been the most prominent members of the church, and ought therefore to have been the last to prove unfaithful to their trust. How sad that their names should appear but once in the New Testament Scriptures, and that in connection with such a reprehension! But there are not a few, even in our own day, who belong to the class of Phygellus and Hermogenes—men who are zealous advocates of the truth in times when it cost them

nothing to befriend it, but who, when it is assailed by the world, discard both it and its apostles.

There is another allusion in this epistle too remarkable to be passed by. Think of St. Paul penning in his cell at Rome these words to Timothy—"I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."* So, then, Timothy had a pious ancestry, and we understand how it was that "from a child he knew the holy Scriptures,"† his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, having doubtless taught him to read the Books of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the Prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. How inestimable the privilege of early religious training! It prepared Timothy to receive the truth preached by Paul at Lystra, and it prepares many a youth at this day, for the service of the Lord Jesus, and for those high and noble enterprises in which such men as Brainerd, Martyn, and Marshman spent their lives. But for Timothy's early acquaintance with the Scriptures, he might never have become an evangelist of Christ; and but for the instruction many of the youth of later times received in the sabbath school, or in the home circle, they would never have attained to eminence in

* 2 Tim. i. 5.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15.

the church, but would have lived a useless and unhappy life.

These allusions to Timothy's early training, are mentioned by Paley in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*" as illustrations of the principle which he so admirably expounds in that work, namely, that the epistles of the New Testament furnish many undesigned coincidences with facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, proving that the epistles are genuine and the history true. "In the Acts of the Apostles," he observes, "in the sixteenth chapter and at the first verse, we are told that Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, and behold a certain disciple was there, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek." In the epistle before us, the first chapter, and at the fourth verse, Paul writes to Timothy thus:—"Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy: when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, *and thy mother Eunice*; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Here we have a fair unforced example of coincidence. In the history, Timothy was "the son of a Jewess *that believed*:" in the epistle, St. Paul applauds "*the faith*" which dwelt in his mother *Eunice*; in the history, it is said of the mother that she was a Jewess, and believed," of the

father, "that he was a Greek." Now, when it is said of the mother *alone* "that she believed," the father being nevertheless mentioned in the same sentence, we are led to suppose of the father, that he did not believe, *i.e.*, either that he was dead, or that he remained unconverted. Agreeably, hereunto, whilst praise is bestowed in the epistle upon one parent, and upon her sincerity in the faith, no notice is taken of the other. The mention of the grandmother is the addition of a circumstance not found in the history; but it is a circumstance which, as well as the names of the parties, might naturally be expected to be known to the Apostle, though overlooked by his historian.*

Similar coincidences are pointed out by Paley, as existing in this epistle, and our youthful readers would do well to study them. They prove that this letter is a genuine production of St. Paul's, and written, though it was, when he was advanced in years, when he was in a gloomy cell, and when he was anticipating martyrdom; they show that his mind was perfectly calm and peaceful, so much so, that he could remember the incidents of bye-gone years, and dwell with pleasure on his early associations with Timothy and his mother. How much more happy was Paul in his prison than Nero in his palace, or on his bed of state!

* *Horæ Paulinæ*, chap. xii. No. II.

SECTION III.

PAUL'S TRIAL.

IN the city of Rome there were several spacious buildings called Basilicae, which served both as places for the transaction of business and as courts of law. The first edifice of this description was founded by M. Porcius Cato, B.C. 182, and was situated in the forum, between the Palatine and Capitoline hills; but, beside this, twenty others were erected in the city at different times, of which the Basilica Sempronia, and Basilica Pauli Aemilii, were two of the most celebrated.

The form of each Basilica was rectangular, the width being not more than half, nor less than one third of the length. The area was divided into three naves, consisting of a centre, and two side aisles, each separated from the central one by a single row of columns. The tribunal of the judge was either rectangular or circular, and was situated on an elevated platform at one end of the building. Here was placed the curule of the prætor, together with seats for the judges or jury, the advocates,

and other persons of distinction. Above the two side aisles were galleries, which, whilst legal proceedings were being carried on, were often crowded with spectators, as also was the ground floor of the centre of the building. In the time of Constantine the Great, many of the Basilicæ were converted into churches, and the form being well adapted to the purpose, churches built at a later period were built after the same model, as are many of the churches of modern times.*

In one of these edifices St. Paul was publicly arraigned before the authorities of the city. We learn from Suetonius that Nero himself sometimes sat on the judicial chair, for he says—"In the administration of justice, he scarcely ever gave his decision on the pleadings before the next day, and then in writing. His manner of hearing causes was not to allow any adjournment, but to despatch them in order as they stood. When he withdrew to consult his assessors, he did not debate the matter openly with them, but silently and privately reading over their opinions, which they gave separately in writing, he pronounced sentence from the tribunal according to his own view of the case, as if it was the opinion of the majority." It has been supposed, therefore, that Paul's trial took

* See Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities." Art: "Basilica."

place in the presence of the Emperor, but it is more probable that the Præfect of the city presided on the occasion, whose jurisdiction, at this time, extended to both civil and criminal cases, and against whose decision there was no appeal.

We infer from 2 Tim. iv. 16, that there were at least two stages in the Apostle's trial, and that he wrote that epistle subsequent to the first, but prior to the second, for he says, "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." It is not improbable that several distinct charges were alleged against this champion of the Cross, and some have thought that the first of these was a charge of having instigated the Christians in Rome to set the city on fire, when he was a prisoner in the city some years before. Who his accusers were, we are not informed, but of one individual he speaks as if he had been somewhat prominent as a witness against him. "Alexander, the copper-smith, did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." There is a person of this name mentioned in Acts xix. 33, but there is no evidence that he was the same Alexander. With the Alexander spoken of in 1 Tim. i. 20, who had made shipwreck of faith, and whom St. Paul excommunicated or delivered unto Satan, this Alexander was perhaps identical. Angry, perhaps,

as men often are, when put out of the church for their misconduct, this man, instead of repenting of his sin, resolved to be revenged on the Apostle, and now appeared in the Basilica of Rome to bear testimony against him as an instigator to incendi-
arism. The office of an informer, especially against Christians, had become somewhat common and even popular at this time, so that accusers of St. Paul would probably be found in considerable numbers, and they would not hesitate to utter falsehoods, if by falsehood they could gain their ends.

But had he no friends? Was there no one bold enough to advocate his cause? Would no one among those who professed Christianity stand forth on his behalf and confute the statements alleged against him? No! He was left to defend himself alone. No one stood by him. All forsook him. Perhaps Luke was with him; but Luke never appears in the Acts as a public speaker, and it may be that his testimony would not be received in a Roman court. If it be asked why the Apostle was forsaken, the reply is, that probably those who should have been his friends were afraid of being themselves accused as Christians, and failed to stand forward on his behalf from a want of moral courage and of readiness to brave the consequences that might ensue.

Yet the Apostle was not friendless after all. The

Lord stood by, and His presence was sufficient even for this great emergency. Observe the prisoner! There he stands, with one arm chained to the soldier by his side, and, in the presence of his judge and of the vast audience that fills the aisles and galleries of the Basilica, he nobly and fearlessly defends his cause. In some such address as he delivered in the presence of Agrippa, he declares who and what he is, proclaims Christ crucified as the risen Saviour of the world, and appeals to the consciences of his auditors, until some of them tremble on their seats. O what a sermon Paul preached that day! He probably expected that it would be the last opportunity he would have of addressing such an assembly, and he resolved to proclaim, fully and openly, the great principles of which he was the advocate. Adverting to the occasion in his letter to Timothy, he says, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."* We infer from this passage that Paul had on this occasion an opportunity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles—the people who had come into the court to witness his trial—

* 2 TIM. iv. 17.

and that he embraced it gladly, and was enabled, the Lord Jesus being present with him, to speak boldly in His name, and to declare the truth with much liberty and power. It would appear, too, that of the charge alleged against him at that time he was acquitted, for he says—"I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." By this expression he meant, according to some commentators, that he was delivered from the power of Nero; according to others, from the court in which he was tried, that seemed from the noise and confusion which prevailed, like a den of lions. But more probable is the interpretation of Conybeare and Howson, who suppose that if the Apostle had been convicted of the charge of incendiarism, he would, notwithstanding his Roman citizenship, have been cast to the wild beasts, as were many of the Christians a few years before.* Still more probable, however, is the view given by Alford, that by "the mouth of the lion," is meant Satan, for the Apostle says immediately afterwards—"and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work"—that is, from falling into the power of the tempter, whom I have been able thus far to resist. In spite of desertion and discouragement, the prisoner had witnessed a good confession; had resisted the

* See "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul," vol. ii. p. 580, 8vo edition.

temptation of the enemy to forsake his Master's cause ; had been faithful to his trust in this, one of the most trying scenes of his life, and had thus overcome that great adversary the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."*

But other charges lie against him, and he is remanded back to prison, there to wait until it shall please Nero, or the city Præfect, to hear his accusers yet again. It is probable that a considerable interval now elapsed, and it was during this interval that the Apostle wrote the letter to Timothy from which we gather these interesting particulars. What, then, are now his prospects ? Does he anticipate a further acquittal ? Does he expect to be, ere long, set at liberty ? No ! "I am now ready to be offered," is his language, "and the time of my departure is at hand." He knows that he must suffer for his Master's sake, and that a martyr's death now awaits him ; yet, oh, how calm he is ! how peaceful ! how happy ! "I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give unto me at that day ; and not

* See Alford's Greek Test., vol. iii. p. 381.

to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Such are his triumphant words. And yet he does not boast. He sees the glittering crown, but he is ready to receive it, not as a reward deserved, but as a free gift from the hands of Christ his Lord. He had laboured—he had suffered—he had borne the Cross; and now, almost within his reach, was the victor's palm, and soon he would wave it before the throne of God. Blessed apostle! who would not envy thee thy lot?

St. Paul seems to have expected that his second trial would not take place till the following winter, and hence he says to Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me;" and again, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." Timothy was in Asia Minor, and the Apostle was anxious to see him once more before he died; and not him only, but Mark also, who was profitable to him for the ministry. He, perhaps, wished to give to these two friends a few more words of Christian counsel, and to commit into their hands, part, at least, of the trust which he himself was now about to resign. Did they reach the imperial city before the Apostle's execution? Doubtless they would endeavour to fulfil his earnest request, but the second hearing of St. Paul's case came on in midsummer, and it may

be, therefore, that he never saw Timothy in the flesh again. They met, however, in a brighter sphere, and are now companions in that world which storms and tempests never reach, and in which sorrow and sighing are done away.

In the closing words of this letter to Timothy, the Apostle alludes to some of his friends in a manner which implies that though he had been left alone at his trial, there were some who loved both him and Timothy. "Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren." And who were the persons here named? They are not again mentioned in the New Testament; but Linus is said, by Eusebius, to have become the first Bishop of Rome after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, and Pudens and Claudia are supposed to have been, at a later period, married, the former being a centurion in the Roman army, the latter the daughter of a British King, Tiberius Claudius Cogibudnus, who, it is supposed, was sent by her father as a pledge of his fidelity to the Emperor to the city of Rome, and who, whilst there, became a Christian, and, subsequently, the wife of Pudens.* By what other links St. Paul was connected with Britain, we have no evidence to show; but here, in all

* See Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., p. 594, 8vo edit.; and Alford's Greek Test., vol. iii., prolegomena on 2 Timothy.

probability is one at least, for it may be that, if Claudia ever returned to her native isle, she would convey to her friends, intelligence of the Apostle and his labours ; or, if she remained in Rome, it is not unlikely that she would send to them the news of her conversion, and tell them of the blessedness of the religion of Christ Jesus. Who can say whether the seeds of Christian truth were not sown by means of this kind thus early in our favoured isle ? It was once supposed that Claudia was the daughter of Caractacus, but, though this opinion is no longer held, yet that Caractacus and his family were prisoners in Rome during St. Paul's incarceration in that city is all but certain, and hence they too may have heard of the great Apostle. Tradition, indeed, states that Brennus, the father of Caractacus was converted to the faith through St. Paul's instrumentality, and, on his return to Britain, introduced the gospel among his countrymen. "If such was the case, it is allowable to hope, that the brave chieftain himself, concerning whose fate history is silent, may have found in the truths of the gospel, infinitely more than he had lost, and that from the clouds which overshadowed the close of his earthly career he may have emerged into the light and glory of eternal blessedness."*

* Baxter's "Church History of England," vol. i. p. 7.

There is one other passage in this, the last of St. Paul's epistles, to which reference must be made ere we proceed to the closing scene of his life: the concluding verse of the epistle, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen." How beautiful the prayer! and how characteristic of the Apostle's charity and faith. The Lord Jesus was with *him*, and His presence it was that made the prison more desirable than a palace. And that the Lord Jesus might also be with Timothy, was his most earnest wish. Well did he know that upon this depended Timothy's fidelity as a minister of the gospel and his success in striving to diffuse that gospel through the world. Did the Apostle, when he dictated these words, think of the Saviour's promise to his disciples, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?" He may have thought of them; and whether or not, he thus sought, on Timothy's behalf, the abiding presence of his Lord, that through whatever conflicts his beloved son in the gospel might be called to pass, he might be called to "fight the good fight of faith," and ultimately to lay hold on "eternal life." Let us not forget that these are the last recorded words of the great Apostle, his "Amen," being added expressive of his confidence, that "Grace" would rest on Timothy to the end.

SECTION IV.

PAUL'S MARTYRDOM.

THE second hearing of the Apostle's case occurred in the summer of the year 68 (A. D.,) for in June of that year the Emperor Nero himself died, and universal tradition states that St. Paul was executed under his reign.

It is not improbable that the charge now preferred against the venerable man, was that of being a leader of the sect of the Christians. And on this charge he was condemned. He himself, indeed, would not deny it, for in the fact that he was the Apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, he made his boast. Yet he was not justly condemned, for in preaching Christ he was neither plotting against the throne of Nero nor doing injury to the people or the state. A more innocent man had never entered the imperial city; nor was Marcellus, or any other of its celebrated patriots better worthy of its esteem than he. But Rome knew not her own interests—she was already drunk with the blood of saints, and she still

thirsted for more of their blood. "Guilty" was the verdict of the jurors who sat upon the Apostle's case, and they pronounced that verdict knowing, no doubt, that it would be followed by his speedy death.

The warrant for his execution was signed—perhaps by Nero himself—and as Paul was a Roman citizen, he was sentenced to be beheaded with the sword. Ten days usually elapsed between the passing of the sentence of death on a prisoner and the infliction of that sentence, but under the reign of Nero, this custom was often set aside and the condemned were hurried to their doom. Not long, therefore, did the Apostle live after the second stage of his trial. He was probably taken back to prison, and thence, in a few days, or perhaps in a few hours, conducted to the spot on which he was to die.

South of the city of Rome, and a little to the west of the Via Appia, was the Via Ostia, and tradition says that it was on this road that the Apostle met his death. "I can shew you," says Caius, a Roman proselyte, who lived in the third century, "the trophies of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican, or to the Ostian Road, you will find the trophies of those who have laid the foundation of the church." * Prisoners whose

* Quoted by Eusebius' "Ecclesiastical History," ii. 25. Jerome also says that Paul was beheaded on the Ostian Road, but he adds, what is very doubtful, that Peter was executed on the same day.

execution would be likely to attract considerable attention, were not unfrequently sent, under a military escort, beyond the walls of the city, and it is not improbable, therefore, that some such locality as the Via Ostia, was the spot where the great Apostle of the Gentiles suffered. Let us, then, picture to ourselves the scene. The day of the execution has arrived, and the executioner, with a guard of soldiers, comes to the prison and demands his victim. He is "ready to be offered," and though bending under the weight of more than threescore years, he leaves his cell with a firm step, an untroubled mind, and a countenance beaming with exultant hope. Luke is with him, and perhaps Paul is permitted to lean upon his arm, and to converse with his friend as they proceed on the way. When Elijah was about to be taken up to heaven, Elisha said to him—"My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof;" for as they went on and talked, "there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire." And does not Luke now see by faith, a vision equally as bright—angelic spirits waiting to conduct the soul of his beloved friend to the realms of light and bliss? and does not Paul himself behold that Saviour who appeared to him on the way to Damascus, now holding out to him the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away?

Yes, this is a triumphal procession. Some of Paul's friends probably join it as it passes through the streets—Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and even Claudia, and they weep, as, perhaps, they never wept; but he weeps not. They are sorrowful, but he rejoices; and turning to them oft and again he says, "weep not for me; my work is done, and I am now going to receive my crown." They pass the Porta Ostiensis, and Paul remembers how his Lord suffered "without the gate;" and it may be that another event is now brought to his recollection—the martyrdom of Stephen—of which he himself was a consenting witness. What a change has taken place in him since that day! And now he is about to join the proto-martyr in the paradise of God.

Arrived at the place of execution, Paul utters a few more parting words to his friends, kneels down and prays with them for the last time, and then calmly lays his head upon the block. In a moment the executioner severs it from the body and his spirit quits its tenement and towers away.

" The pains of death are past,
Labour and sorrow cease ;
And, life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace."

It was, indeed, a glorious death, for it was the

termination of a glorious earthly life. And what became of the Apostle's corpse? Jerome says that it was buired in the Via Ostia; but others state that his friends obtained possession of it and laid it in the Catacombs, those subterranean labyrinths, in which the early Christians sometimes took refuge from persecution, and in which many of them found their last long home.*

In striking contrast with the noble and triumphant death of Paul, stands the melancholy end of Nero. He had been declared an enemy by the Roman Senate, and search was made for him that he might be punished according to the ancient custom. "What kind of punishment is it?" he asked, when a servant brought him the intelligence. "The criminal is stripped naked and scourged to death, whilst his neck is fastened within a forked stake," was the reply. Terrified at these words he took up two daggers which he had in his possession, and feeling the point of them said, "The fatal hour is not yet come." Then he exclaimed, "I yet live to my shame and disgrace. This is not becoming for Nero—come, then; courage man." And hearing the horsemen approaching the house who were in pursuit of him, he plunged a dagger into his throat, and in a few moments was a corpse.†

* See Maitland's "Church in the Catacombs," London, 1846.

† See Suetonius' "Lives of the Cæsars." Nero, xlix.

Such was the suicidal act of the last and basest of the Cæsars, the man who murdered his own preceptor, the illustrious Seneca, and under whose cruel reign not only Paul the Apostle, but many other Christians, were inhumanly and unjustly put to death. No wonder that he died a coward. The spectres of his victims doubtless haunted his imagination, and, heathen though he was, his conscience told him that such crimes as his would meet with their desert. For awhile the wicked may flourish as a green bay tree, whilst the righteous are oppressed, enslaved, and persecuted; but "there is a God that judgeth in the earth," and in the end, judgment will overtake the one, whilst honour and glory will be awarded to the other.

In closing these pages, we would place before the reader, some of the lessons which the narrative of Paul's martyrdom suggests, and which are specially valuable in the times in which we live.

It tells *of the truth and power of Christianity*. If, as some affirm, Christianity is of no more value than the religion of Confucius, Zoroaster, or Mahommed, how are we to account for the fact (and it is by no means a solitary one), that it sustained the mind of such a man as Paul in all his conflicts, and enabled him to meet death with such fortitude and courage? "He was a fanatic," the infidel will perhaps reply, "and fanaticism will

lead men to sacrifice their lives for any religious creed." But where is the evidence that he was a fanatic? Does his life furnish it? Do his writings present it? With something of this kind he was charged by Festus in the presence of Agrippa; but his reply was, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and there is not a page in his history which does not attest the truth of the declaration. No; he was no fanatic, but a man of calm and sober judgment. He knew both what he said and what he did. He had no worldly or political schemes to accomplish as Mahommed had, for his one grand object was to spread the knowledge of the truth, and to elevate and bless mankind. Could his principles have sustained him had they not been true? Where, in the pages of history, shall we find any false system of religion producing such effects on the mind of a man of intelligence like Paul, as Christianity produced on his? Where are the martyrs of Hindooism, of superstition, or of infidelity? We hear of them, it is true; but who and what are they? Can they be compared with Paul the aged? Are they worthy, in any respect, of being placed by the side of the martyrs of the Christian church? He must be a bold man who will affirm it, for the difference between them is an essential difference, ignorance and fanaticism

being characteristics of the one, the loftiest intelligence and the calmest wisdom, characteristics of the other.

It tells us that *Christianity is indestructible and eternal*. Sad to the church, was the day when she lost her greatest champion, and her enemies doubtless thought that now she would soon sink into utter insignificance, whilst she herself, perhaps, mourned as for an only son ; for when a commander falls in the field of battle, the whole army is discouraged, and sometimes, even put to flight. Was it so when Paul fell ? No: the church wept, but she soon took heart, for she knew that though the Apostle of the Lord Jesus was dead, Jesus Himself still lived, and forward, therefore, she went in her career of triumph, as zealous and courageous as when Paul was with her.

“ The blood of martyrs living still,
Makes the ground pregnant where it flows ;
And, for the temporary ill,
Thereon eternal triumph grows.”

St. Paul was not the last who sealed his testimony with his blood. History tells us of many of his successors who caught his spirit and similarly bore witness for their Lord. There was Polycarp, who was burnt alive ; there was Ignatius, who was thrown to the wild beasts ; there

was Cyprian of Carthage, who, when he heard the fatal sentence, cried out, "God be thanked," which were his last words; and there was one Marius, a Christian soldier, who was requested to sacrifice to the gods and to the emperor, or forfeit his life in three hours. "Meanwhile the Bishop Theotecnus led him into the church. On the one hand he pointed to the sword which hung at the centurion's side, and on the other to a volume of the gospel which he held up before him. He was to choose between the two—the military office and the gospel. Without hesitation, Marius raised his right hand and seized the sacred volume. 'Now,' said the Bishop, 'hold fast on God, and may you obtain what you have chosen. So depart in peace.' He bravely confessed, and was beheaded."* Mention might be made, too, of the martyrs of the Reformation—of Huss, and Jerome—of Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer; but we will come down to our own times, that we may see how the same heroic spirit breathes in Christians of the nineteenth century. Madagascar, into which the gospel was introduced in the year 1818, has often since been the scene of persecution, and Mr. Ellis, in his recent work on that country, furnishes many examples of the heroic courage of the Malagasy Christians, who, for

* Neander's "Church History," vol. i., p. 192. Clark.

no other crime than that of embracing the gospel, were condemned to die by the Queen's government. "Four nobles were burnt alive in a place by themselves. Two of them, namely, Andriampinery and Ramanandalana, were husband and wife—the latter expecting to become a mother. At the place of execution, life was offered them if they would take the required idolatrous oath. Declining to do this, they were bound, and laid on the pile of wood or placed between split poles, and the pile was then kindled." Fourteen others were taken to a place of common execution, and on refusing to take the required oaths, were thrown over a steep precipice—the Tarpeian rocks of Antananarivo. One young woman was reserved to the last, as it was hoped she would be induced to recant. But she refused, and begged to share the fate of her friends. She was taken away and afterwards sent to a distant part of the country.*

Yet, in Madagascar, as elsewhere, the gospel still triumphs, and "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Christianity can never die. Crowns may tarnish, thrones may totter, empires may fall, and dynasties may be overthrown, but the religion of the Cross will outlast all time, for "it is

* "Three Visits to Madagascar," by the Rev. W. Ellis. p. 165—167.

not the work of man, whose labours pass away and are forgotten ; it is the work of God, who upholds what He has created, and it has the promise of its Divine Head as the pledge of its duration."

It tells us, that *he only is safe and happy who has espoused Christ's cause, and is fighting under His banner*. Society is divided into two classes, the servants of Jesus Christ and His enemies. There is no middle class. He that is not with Christ, is against Him. Neutrality there can be none. On whose side will the victory turn? on that of infidelity, ungodliness, indifferentism, and worldliness; or on that of truth, and righteousness, and God? The answer is not doubtful, for the contest is in fact already settled. Is it not, then, the extreme of folly, to stand in opposition to the government of Christ; and is not he only wise and happy, who, whatever it may cost him, enlists under the banner of the PRINCE OF PEACE? You cannot, perhaps, Christian reader, be a martyr for Christ in the literal sense of the expression, but you may catch something of a martyr's spirit, and be animated with something of a martyr's zeal. And if you imitate the example of St. Paul, and nobly lay yourself upon the altar of sacrifice, though, like him, you should suffer the loss of all things, yours in the end will be the victory and the gain, for to each one of Christ's servants is

the promise sure—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." And, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

OF ST. PAUL'S HISTORY, WITH THE PLACES HE VISITED IN THE ORDER OF TIME, AND REFERENCES TO THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS.

A.D.	Places.	Events, etc.	Scripture References.
2 to 16	Tarsus	Birth, etc.	Acts xxi. 39, xxii. 3.
16 to 25	Jerusalem . . .	Education	Acts xxii. 3.
25 to 36	Tarsus (?) . . .	Working as a Tent Maker (?)	
36 to 37	Jerusalem . . .	Persecuting the Church . .	Acts vii. 58, viii. 1-4.
37	Damascus	Conversion	Acts ix. 1-9.
38	Arabia	Preparing for his Work . .	Gal. i. 17.
38	Damascus	Preaching the Gospel . . . }	Gal. i. 17, Acts ix. 20-25.
40	Jerusalem	Do. do.	Gal. i. 18, Acts ix. 26-29.
40	Cæsarea Philippi	On his way to Tarsus . . .	Acts ix. 30.
40	Tarsus	Preaching the Gospel . . .	Acts ix. 30.
40	Syria	Do. do.	Gal. i. 21.
40	Cilicia (Tarsus) .	Do. do.	Gal. i. 21.
41	Antioch in Syria.	Teaching, etc.	Acts. xi. 25, 26.
43	Jerusalem	The Death of James	Acts xi. xii.
44	Antioch	Teaching, etc.	Acts xii. 25, xiii. 1-3
45	Seleucia	On his way to Cyprus . . .	Acts xiii. 4.
45	Cyprus	Preaching, Conversion of }	
45	Salamis	Sergius Paulus, Elymas }	Acts xiii. 5-12.
45	Paphos	the sorcerer	
45	Pergain Pamphylia	Preaching	Acts. xiii. 13.
46	Antioch in Pisidia	Discourse in the Synagogue .	Acts xiii. 14-50.
46	Iconium	Preaching, The Assault . .	Acts xiv. 1-5.
46	Lystra	The Cripple Healed, etc. . .	Acts xiv. 6-19.
46	Derbe	Preaching	Acts xiv. 20.
46	Lystra		
46	Iconium	Confirming the Disciples }	
46	Antioch in Pisidia	and Ordaining Elders . }	Acts xiv. 21-23.
46	Pamphylia		
47	Perga	Preaching the Word, etc. . .	Acts xiv. 24, 25.
47	Attalia		
47 to 48	Antioch in Syria.	Rehearsal of the Work . . .	Acts xiv. 26-28.
50	Jerusalem	Council of the Apostles . . }	Acts xv. 1-21, Gal. ii. 1.
51	Antioch	Teaching and Preaching . .	Acts xv. 30-35.
51	Syria		
51	Cilicia	Confirming the Churches . .	Acts xv. 41.
52	Derbe		
52	Lystra, etc.	Timothy Circumcised, etc. .	Acts xvi. 1-4.
52	Phrygia		
52	Galatia	Preaching, etc.	Acts xvi. 6.
52	Mysia	Preaching (?)	Acts xvi. 7-8.
52	Troas	Vision of the Man of Macedonia	Acts xvi. 8-9.
52	Samothracia . . .		
52	Neapolis	On his way to Philippi . . .	Acts xvi. 11.
52	Philippi (Macedonia)	Conversion of Lydia, Imprisonment, etc. . }	Acts xvi. 12-40.
52	Amphipolis		
	Apollonia	On his way to Thessalonica .	Acts xvii. 1.

A.D.	Places.	Events, etc.	Scripture References.
52	Thessalonica . .	Preaching, etc., Assault . .	Acts xvii. 1-9.
52	Berea	Nobility of the Bereans . .	Acts xvii. 10-14.
52	Athens	Preaching on Mars' Hill . .	Acts xvii. 15-34.
53	Corinth	Writes 1st and 2nd Thessa. .	Acts xviii. 1-12.
54	Ephesus	Reasoning in the Synagogue .	Acts xviii. 19.
54	Cæsarea	On his way to Jerusalem . .	Acts xviii. 22.
54	Jerusalem . . .	Salutes the Church	
55	Antioch	Preaching, etc.	
55	Galatia	Strengthens the Disciples . .	Acts xviii. 23.
55	Phrygia		
55 to 57	Ephesus	Two years' residence, Writes } 1st Corinthians	Acts xix. 1-41.
57	Macedonia . . .	Writes 2nd Corinthians . . .	Acts xx. 1.
58	Greece	Preaching, etc.	Acts xx. 2.
58	Corinth	Writes Galatians and Romans .	Rom. xvi. 21-27.
58	Asia Minor . . .	Preaching, etc.	Acts xx. 4.
58	Troas	Recovery of Eutychus, etc. . .	Acts xx. 5-12.
58	Assos	Preaching, etc.	Acts xx. 13-15.
58	Mitylene		
58	Chios		
58	Samos		
58	Trogyllium . . .		
58	Miletus	Meeting with the Elders . . .	Acts xx. 17-38.
58	Coo	On his return to Syria . . .	Acts xxi. 1-3.
58	Rhodes		
58	Patara		
58	Tyre		
58	Ptolemais		
58	Cæsarea	Philip and Agabus	Acts xxi. 7.
58	Jerusalem . . .	Arrest, Speech on the Stairs .	Acts xxi. 8-14.
58 to 60	Cæsarea	Imprisonment, Brought } before Felix, Defence be- } fore Agrippa, Appeal, } Sent to Rome	Acts xxi. 15, xxii.
60	Sidon	On his Voyage	Acts xxiii. 23-25,
60	Myra (Lycia) . .	Change of Ship	xxiv., xxvii. 1, 2.
60	Crete—The Fair } Havens	On his Voyage	Acts xxvii. 3.
60	Clauda	The Tempest	
60	Melita (Malta) .	Shipwreck, Another Ship . .	Acts xxvii. 5.
60	Syracuse	Remains three days	Acts xxviii. 7, 8.
61	Rhegium	On his further Voyage . . .	Acts xxviii. 16.
61	Puteoli		
61 to 63	Rome	Two years' Imprisonment } in his own house, writes } Philemon, Colossians, } Ephesians, Philippians, } Hebrews (?)	Acts xxviii. 11-11.
63	Macedonia (?) . .	After his liberation	Acts xxviii. 12.
63	Asia Minor (?) . .	Preaching, etc.	Philippians ii. 24.
64 to 65	Spain (?)	Preaching, etc.	Philemon 22.
66	Asia Minor . . .	Writes 1st Timothy	Rom. xv. 24.
67	Macedonia (?) . .		1 Tim. i. 3.
67	Ephesus (?) . . .	Writes Titus	Titus iii. 12.
67	Nicopolis	Winters there	
68	Rome	Second Imprisonment, } Writes 2nd Timothy, } Trial and Execution . . .	2 Tim. iv. 6-8.



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